

THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY 1, 1874.

IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

OVER THE CLIFF.

A HOT, windless August day had settled down into a dull, brooding evening, presageful of a coming storm. It was nearly dark by the time Lionel Dering was ready to turn his face homeward. The tide was coming in with an ominous muffled roar ; the wind, unfelt all day, was now blowing in fitful puffs from various points of the compass, so that the weathercock on the green, in front of the Silver Lion, was more undecided than usual, and did not know its own mind for two minutes at a time. The boatmen were busy with their tiny craft, making everything fast for the night ; and the bathing men were dragging their machines high and dry beyond reach of the incoming tide. Many of the excursionists—those with families chiefly—were already making their way towards the railway station ; but others there were who seemed bent on keeping up their merriment to the last moment. These latter could be seen through the wide-open windows of the Silver Lion, footing it merrily on the club-room floor, to the music of two wheezy fiddles. A few minutes later there comes a warning whistle from the engine. The music stops suddenly ; the quadrille is left unfinished ; pipes are laid aside ; glasses are quickly emptied ; and the lads and lasses, with many a shout and burst of laughter, rush helter-skelter across the green, to find their places in the train.

"We shall have a rough night, Ben," said Mr. Dering to a man who was coming up from the beach.

"Yes, sir, there's a storm brewin' fast," answered Ben, carrying a finger to his forehead. "If I was you, Mr. Dering," he added, "I

wouldn't go over the cliffs to-night. It ain't safe after dark, and the storm 'll break afore you get home." But Mr. Dering merely shook his head, laughed, bade Ben good-night, and kept on his way.

The old boatman's words proved true. The first flash of lightning came just as the last houses of Melcham were lost to view behind a curve of the road, and when Lionel had two miles of solitary walking still before him. The thunder and the rain, however, were still far out at sea.

By this time it was almost dark, but Mr. Dering pressed forward without hesitation or delay. The cliff road, dangerous as it would have been under such circumstances to any ordinary wayfarer, had for him no terrors. He knew every yard of it as well as he knew the walk under the apple-trees in his own garden. It was not the first time by any means that he had traversed it after nightfall. As for the lightning, it was rather an assistance than otherwise, serving every two or three minutes, as it did, to show him exactly where he was. It was a bad road enough, certainly. Unfenced in several places, with here and there a broad, yawning chasm in the direct path, where some huge bulk of the soft earthy cliff, undermined by fierce winter tides, had broken bodily away and had gone to feed the ever-hungry waves. But to Lionel every dangerous point was familiar, and he followed the little circuitous bends in the path, necessitated by the breaks in the frontage of the cliff, instinctively and without thought.

He had been thinking of E-lith West—his ladye-love, whom he might not hope ever to see again. In his long solitary walks both by day and night she was almost always in his thoughts. Not but what Lionel, this evening, had an eye for the lightning, so beautifully terrible in its apparently purposeless vagaries. Fast following one another, came the blue, quivering flashes, lighting up, for one brief moment at a time, the barren skyward-climbing cliff, and the still more barren waste of sea.

"Like my life—like my life," murmured Lionel to himself, his eyes still bent on the wide track of moorland, which had just been lighted up by a more vivid flash than common. "Barren and unprofitable. Without byre or homestead. Left unploughed, unfenced, uncared for. Of no apparent use, were it not that a few wild-flowers choose to grow there, and a few birds, equally wild, to build their nests there. But over it, as over more favoured spots, the free breeze of Heaven blows day and night, and keeps it sweet; and the sea makes everlasting music at its feet."

These thoughts were still in Mr. Dering's mind when a sudden turn in the pathway brought him in view of the lighthouse, whose gleaming lantern, although full half a mile away, shone out through the coming storm like the cheery welcome of a friend.

The thunder was coming nearer, bringing the rain with it. The

flashes were becoming more vividly painful. The sea's hoarse chorus was growing more loud and triumphant. Lionel had paused for a moment to gather breath. A flash—and there, not fifty yards away, and coming towards him, was a man—a stranger! It was the work of an instant for the lightning to photograph the picture on his brain, but that one instant was enough for him to see and recognize the deadly peril in which the man was placed. He was marching unknowingly to his death. Not six yards in front of him yawned the most dangerous chasm in the whole face of the cliff.

In another moment Lionel had recovered his presence of mind. "Stop! stop for your life!" he shouted at the top of his voice. "Don't stir another step." It was too dark for him to see whether the man had heard and understood his warning cry. He must wait for the next flash to tell him that. The words had hardly left his lips when the thunder burst almost immediately over head, as it seemed, and the first heavy drops of rain began to fall. Lionel, meantime, was making his way as quickly as he could round the back of the chasm. Two minutes more would bring him to the very spot where he had seen the stranger. But while he had still some dozen yards or more of the dangerous path to traverse, there came another blinding flash. It had come and gone in the twinkling of an eye, but that brief second of time was sufficient to show Lionel that the man was no longer there. An inarticulate cry of horror burst from his lips. With beating heart and straining nerves, he pressed forward till he stood on the very spot where he had seen the man: but he was standing there alone.

The storm was at its height. The forked flashes came thick and fast. One crack of thunder was followed by another, before the echoed mutterings of the last had time to die away. A wild hurricane of wind and rain was beating furiously over land and sea. Utterly regardless of the storm, Lionel lay down at full length on the short, wet turf, and shading his eyes with his hands, peered down into the black gulf below. It was a dangerous thing to do, but in the excitement of the moment all sense of personal fear was forgotten. He waited for the flashes; but when they came they showed him nothing save the wild turmoil of the rising tide as it dashed itself in fury against the huge boulders with which the beach was thickly strewn. It would be high water in half an hour. Already the base of the cliff was washed by the surging waves. Lionel shouted with all his might, but the wind blew the sound back again, and the thunder drowned it. He stood up despairingly. What should he do to succour the poor wretch who lay there, dying or, perhaps, already dead, at the foot of the cliff? What could he do? Alone and unaided he could do nothing. He must seek the help of others. But where? The nearest point where he could hope to get assistance was the lighthouse, and that was nearly half a mile away. But long before the lighthouse could have been reached, and help brought back, the

rising tide would have completely barred the passage along the foot of the cliffs, and would, in all probability, have washed the body out to sea. At the point where he was standing the cliff had a sheer descent of a hundred feet to the beach. But suddenly Mr. Dering remembered, and it seemed to him like a flash of inspiration, that no great distance away there was a slight natural break in the cliff, known as "The Smugglers Staircase." It was merely a narrow gully or seam in the face of the rock, not much wider than an ordinary chimney. If it had ever really been used by smugglers in years gone by as a natural staircase, by means of which access could be had to the beach, they must have been very active and reckless fellows indeed. But what had been made use of by one man might be made use of by another, Lionel thought, and, with some faint renewal of hope in his breast, he made his way along the cliff in the direction of the Staircase. If he could only get down to the beach before the tide had risen much higher, and could succeed in finding the body, he might, perhaps, be able to obtain some foothold among the channies of the cliff, where he would be beyond reach of the waves, and where he might wait till daybreak, and the ebbing of the tide, should give him a chance of seeking help elsewhere.

But here he was at the Staircase—a place, of a truth, to try a man's nerve, even by broad daylight. Although Lionel had never ventured either up or down it, he was no stranger to its peculiar features. More than once, in his rambles along the cliffs, he had paused to examine it, and to wonder whether the jagged, misshapen ledges of protruding rock from which it was supposed to derive its likeness to a gigantic staircase, were the result of Nature's handiwork or that of man.

Lionel had lost no time. From his first sight of the stranger till now was not more than five or six minutes. Pausing for a moment on the edge of the Staircase, he flung his hat aside, buttoned his coat, and then, instinctively, turned up his cuffs. Then he went down on his hands and knees, and was just lowering one leg over the edge of the cliff, when his collar was roughly seized, and a hoarse voice growled in his ear: "In heaven's name, Mr. Dering, what are you about?"

For the moment, Lionel was startled. Next instant he recognized Bunce, the coastguardsman—a very worthy fellow, to whom he was well known. A few rapid words from Lionel explained everything. "All the same, Mr. Dering, you can't bring the dead back to life, do how you will," said Bunce, "and that man's as dead as last year's mackerel, you may depend on't. Let alone which, the tide's right up to the bottom of the cliff. No, no, Mr. Dering—axing your pardon—but one live man is worth twenty dead uns."

"Bunce, you are a fool!" said Lionel, wrathfully. "If I were not in a hurry, I would prove it to you. Take your hand off my collar, sir. I tell you I am going down here. If you choose to help me, go to the lighthouse and get Jasper to come back with you, and bring

some ropes and a lantern or two, and whatever else you think might be useful. If you don't choose to help me, go about your business, and leave me to do mine."

"But you are going to certain death; you are indeed, Mr. Dering," pleaded the coastguardsman.

"Bunce," said Lionel, "you are an old woman. Good-bye." There was a flash, and Bunce caught a momentary glimpse of a stern white face and two resolute eyes. When the next flash came, Lionel was not to be seen. He was on his perilous journey down the Smugglers' Staircase.

"A madman—a crazy madman," muttered Bunce. "If he gets safe to the bottom of the Staircase, he'll go no further. Not as I'm going to desert him. Not likely. Though he did call me a old woman."

Going down on one knee on the wet grass, he put both his hands to his mouth, and shouted with all his might. "I'm going to the lighthouse for help, Mr. Dering." He listened but there came no answer. Presently, with a little quaking of the heart, he rose to his feet. "He needn't have called me a old woman," he muttered. With that he pulled his hat fiercely over his brow, and set off for the lighthouse at a rapid walk, which soon quickened into a run.

How Lionel got down to the bottom of the Staircase he could never afterwards have told. He only knew that when about half way down his foot slipped. The next thing he remembered was finding himself among the rocks at the bottom, bruised, bleeding, and partially stunned. A larger wave than usual, which dashed completely over him, gave him a shock which helped to revive him. Not the least perilous part of his enterprise was still before him. Already the tide was two feet deep at the foot of the cliff. Fortunately, the wind had gone down, and the rain had in some measure abated; but had it not been for the lightning's friendly flashes, Lionel's task would have been a hopeless one. The road he had to take was thickly strewn with huge boulders, and gigantic masses of rock which had fallen—some of them centuries ago—from the cliffs overhead. Between and over these Lionel had to make his way to the point where the stranger had fallen. It was a work of time and peril, more especially now that the tide was coming in so dangerously fast, beating and eddying round the rocks and dashing over them in showers of stinging spray. Lionel saw clearly that, in any case, it would be quite impossible for him to return by the way he was going till ebb of tide. He must find some "coign of vantage" among the fallen rocks, or high up in the face of the cliff, beyond reach of the waves, and there wait patiently for further help. But first to find the stranger.

Manfully, gallantly, Lionel Dering set himself to the task before him. Foot by foot, yard by yard, he fought his way forward. The lightning showed him at once the dangers he had to contend against,

and how best to avoid them. Over some of the rocks he had to clamber on all fours; round others he had to pick his way, waist-deep in water. Now and then, a larger wave than common would seize him, dash him like a log against the rocks, and then leave him, bruised and breathless, to gather up its forces for another attack. But Lionel never faltered or looked back. Onward he went, slowly but surely nearing the object of which he was in search. Nearly exhausted, all but worn out, at length he reached the heap of débris formed by the falling of the cliff—or rather that portion of it which the sea had spared. He was terribly anxious by this time. If the body of the stranger when it fell had been caught by any of the ledges or rough projecting angles of the débris, and had lodged there, there was just a faint possibility that the man might be still alive. But if, on the contrary, it had rolled down to the foot of the cliff, the waves would long ago have claimed it as their own.

The storm was passing away inland. The lightning was no longer either so frequent or so vivid. Lionel's difficulty was to find the exact point of the cliff from which the stranger had fallen. At the most he could only guess at it. Still, here was the mass of fallen cliff, and the body, unless washed away by the tide, could not be far away.

Having accomplished so much, he had neither long nor far to search. Putting out his hand in the dark to grasp a projecting ledge of rock, which the last flash of lightning had shown to him, his fingers touched a clammy ice-cold face. He drew back his arm with an involuntary shudder. Next moment his heart gave a great throb of relief, and he felt that, whether the man were alive or dead, his labour had not been entirely in vain.

The body was lying among a heap of jagged rocks, half in and half out of the water. Lionel's first idea was that the man was stone dead. But a more careful examination, which he made as soon as he had dragged the body beyond reach of the still-rising tide, convinced him that there were still some flickering signs of life—just the faintest possible pulsation of the heart. The forehead was marked by a thin streak of blood, which Lionel tried to staunch with his handkerchief. For the rest, he made out, by the momentary glimpses which the lightning afforded him, that the man was young, fair, slightly built, and to all appearance, a gentleman. Feeling some hard substance, Lionel put his hand into the stranger's pocket, and drew from it a small travelling flask. It contained a little brandy, with which Lionel moistened the unconscious lips, but the stranger's teeth were so firmly set that he found it impossible to open them. What more could he do? he asked himself, and he was obliged to answer, Nothing. If Bunce had not deserted him, help would be forthcoming before long. Otherwise, he must wait there for daybreak and the ebbing of the tide.

But faithful good-hearted Bunce had not deserted him. He had

roused up Jasper, the lighthouse-keeper, out of his first snooze — Jasper's two mates being on duty—and had brought that individual, still half dazed, but responding manfully to the call, together with a quantity of stout rope, and a couple of ship's lanterns, not forgetting a blanket and a nip of cognac, and was back again on the cliffs only a few minutes after Lionel's search was at an end.

Never had human voice sounded so welcome to Lionel as did the coastguardsman's hoarse shouts that August night. They soon made each other out, and then the rest was comparatively easy. A rope was slung round the body of the still unconscious stranger, which was then hauled up by the two men with all possible care to the top of the cliff, a process which was repeated in the case of Lionel.

"I never thought to see you alive again, Mr. Dering," said Bunce, with tears in his eyes, as Lionel grasped him warmly by the hand. "Where do you wish to have the gentleman taken to?"

"To Gatehouse Farm, of course," said Lionel. "Jasper, you run into the village, and borrow a horse and cart, and some straw, and another blanket or two, and get back again as if your life depended on it."

And so about midnight the stranger, who had never recovered consciousness, was laid in Mr. Dering's own bed at Gatehouse Farm. They had found a card-case in his pocket, the cards in which were inscribed with the name of "Mr. Tom Bristow," but that was the only clue to his identity. Dr. Bell, the local practitioner, was quickly on the spot.

"A serious case, Mr. Dering—a very serious case," said the little man, two hours later, while pulling on his gloves and waiting for his cob to be brought round. "But we have an excellent constitution to fall back upon, and, with great care, we shall pull through. We have dislocated our left shoulder; we have broken three of our ribs; and we have got one of the ugliest cuts on the back of our head that it was ever our good fortune to have to deal with. But with care, sir, we shall pull through."

Somewhat comforted in mind by the doctor's assurance, Lionel went back up stairs, and having taken a parting glance at his guest, and satisfied himself that nothing more could be done for the present, he lay down on the sofa in the next room to snatch an hour's hurried sleep.

He had no prevision of the future, that August morning : there was no voice to whisper in his ear that the man whose life he had just saved at the risk of his own would, before many months were over, repay the obligation by rescuing him, Lionel Dering, from a still more bitter strait, and be the means of restoring him both to liberty and life.

CHAPTER II.

THE HERMIT OF GATEHOUSE FARM.

LIONEL DERING at this time was twenty-eight years old. A tall, well-built, fair-complexioned man, but bronzed by much exposure to the sun and wind. His eyes were dark grey, very steady and penetrating. He had a habit of looking full into the faces of those with whom he talked, as though he were trying to penetrate the mask before him. It was a habit which some people did not like. He had never shaved in his life, and the strong, firm lines of his mouth, betokening immense power of will and great tenacity of purpose, were all but hidden by the soft, flowing outlines of a thick beard and moustache, pale golden as to colour. His free, outdoor life, and the hard work to which he had accustomed himself of late years, had widened his chest and hardened his muscles, and had ripened him into a very tolerable specimen of those stalwart, fair-bearded islanders whose forms and figures are familiar wherever the English language is spoken. For three years past he had been living the life of a modern hermit at Gatehouse Farm. His reasons for choosing thus to isolate himself entirely from the world of his old friends and associations, to bury himself alive, as it were, while all the pleasures of life were still sweet to his lips, will not take long to explain.

Lionel Dering came of a good family on both his father's side and his mother's. Unfortunately, on his father's side there was little or no money, and his mother's side never forgave the marriage, which was one of those romantic run-away affairs of which people used to hear every week at a time when the blacksmith of Gretna Green was a legal forger of matrimonial fetters.

After nine years of married happiness, Godfrey Dering died, leaving his widow with two children, Lionel, aged eight, and Richard, aged six. Mrs. Dering found herself with an annuity of six hundred pounds a year, which her husband's care and prevision had secured to her. For the future, this would be the sole means of subsistence of herself and children. Her own family had repudiated her from the day of her marriage, and she was too proud to court them now. She sent her two boys away to a good school, and while still undecided where she would permanently fix her home, she went to live for a while with some of her husband's friends at Cheltenham—and at Cheltenham she stayed till the day of her death. The Langshaws, under whose roof she found a home during the first year of her bereavement, were worthy well-to-do farmers, distant relations of Godfrey, who seemed as if they could never do enough for pretty Mrs. Dering and her two fatherless boys. After a time she took lodgings in the town itself, where her money and her good looks, combined with her amiability and easy, cheerful disposition, soon attracted around her a wide circle of friends and acquaintances. She had several offers of marriage during the

ten years of her widowhood, but she remained steadily faithful to the memory of her first love, and when she died her husband's name was the last word on her lips.

His mother died when Lionel Dering was eighteen years old, six months after his younger brother, Richard, had gone to India to carve out for himself that mythical fortune which every enthusiast of eighteen believes must one day infallibly be his.

Lionel had been brought up to no business or profession. While still a youth at school, a great part of his holidays had been spent at the Langshaws' farm, three miles out of Cheltenham, where he was always a welcome guest. Here he learnt to ride, to drive, to shoot, and to take an interest in all those outdoor avocations which mark the due recurrence of the seasons on a large and well-managed farm. But when his school-days were really at an end, both Lionel and his mother were utterly at a loss to decide in which particular groove the young man's talents—genius Mrs. Dering called it—would be likely to meet with their amplest and most speedy recognition.

Truth to tell, the widowed mother trembled at the idea of parting from her favourite boy, of letting him go out unprotected into the great world, so full of wickedness and temptation, of which she herself knew so little, but about which she had heard such terrible tales. So week passed after week, and month after month, and Lionel Dering still stayed at home with his mother. An inquiry was made here and there, a letter written now and then, but all in a half-hearted sort of way, and Mrs. Dering never heard the postman's knock without trembling lest it should be the herald of a summons which would tear Lionel from her side for ever. When, at last, the dreadful summons did come in the shape of the offer of an excellent situation in India, Mrs. Dering declared that it would break her heart if Lionel left her. She was a very delicate little woman, be it borne in mind, and Lionel, who loved her tenderly, fully believed every word she said—believed that her heart would really break if they were separated—as in all probability it would have done. "I won't leave you, mother—I won't go away to India," said Lionel, as he kissed away her tears.

"You might let *me* go, mother, instead of Li," said Richard, as he too kissed her. "If you love me, mother, let me go."

So Richard went to India in place of his brother, and Lionel still stayed at home. Six months later, Mrs. Dering, who had been a partial invalid for years, died quite suddenly, and Lionel found himself, after the payment of all expenses, with about fifty pounds in ready money and no ascertainable means of earning his own living.

In this emergency, a certain Mr. Eitzenschlager, a German merchant, who had met Mrs. Dering in society some five or six years previously, and had fallen in love with her to no purpose, came to the rescue by offering Lionel a stool in his counting-house, at Liverpool. But to

Lionel, with his outdoor tastes, the thought of any mode of life which involved confinement within doors was utterly distasteful. He preferred taking up his quarters for a time with his old friends the Langshaws, and there waiting till another opening should give him an opportunity of joining his brother in India.

When Dorothy St. George ran away from home to marry Godfrey Dering, she never afterwards saw her father, nor any member of her family, except her youngest brother, Lionel—the brother after whom her eldest boy was named. He was a soldier, and shortly after Dorothy's marriage he was ordered abroad, but he wrote occasionally to the sister whom as a boy he had loved so well, therein disobeying his father's express command, that no communication of any kind should henceforth be held with the disgraced daughter of the house. But many years passed before Lionel St. George had an opportunity of seeing his sister—not, in fact, till some time after their father's death: not till he had won his way up, step by step, to the rank of general, and had come back from India, a grizzled veteran, with a year's leave of absence in which to recruit his health, and pay brief visits to such of his relatives and friends as death had spared. His sister Dorothy was one of the first whom he made a point of seeing. For Lionel he contracted a great liking, chiefly, perhaps, because his nephew was named after him, and because in the tall, bronzed young man he saw, or fancied that he saw, many points of resemblance to what he himself had been in happy days long gone by. It was a pity, the general said to himself, that such a fine young fellow should be kept tied to his mother's apron string. So, after he got back to India, he brought his influence to bear, and an eligible opening for Lionel was quickly found. But, as we have already seen, Lionel did not avail himself of his uncle's offer. Richard went to India in his stead, and Lionel was by his mother's side when she died.

Left thus alone, it seemed to Lionel that he could not do better than join his brother, and he wrote his uncle to that effect.

But before he could possibly get an answer from India, something happened which changed the whole current of his life. Mr. Eitzen-schlager, the German merchant, died, and left Lionel a legacy of twenty thousand pounds.

What a fund of quiet, unsuspected romance there must have been in the heart of the old Teuton! At fifty years of age he had fallen in love with pretty Mrs. Dering; but Mrs. Dering had nothing but esteem to give him in return. Once rejected, he never spoke of his feelings again, but went on loving in secret and in silence. Had Mrs. Dering outlived him, the twenty thousand pounds would have been left to her. As it was, the money was left to the son whom she had loved so well.

An unexpected legacy of twenty thousand pounds is enough to upset the calculations of most men. It upset Lionel's. The idea of going

out to India was abandoned indefinitely. Now had come the time when he could carry out the cherished wish of his life. Time and money were both at his command, and he would travel—travel far and wide, studying “men and manners, climates, councils, governments.” When he was tired of travel, he would buy a little estate somewhere, and settle down quietly for the remainder of his days as a gentleman farmer. Such were some of the day-dreams of simple-minded Lionel—day-dreams which the future would laugh to scorn.

Hitherto Lionel had escaped scathless and heart-whole from all the soft seductive wiles prepared by Love to ensnare the unwary. But his time had come at last, as it comes to all of us. He saw Edith West, and acknowledged himself a lost man. Nor could anyone who knew Edith wonder at his infatuation. She was an orphan and an heiress. She lived with her uncle, Mr. Garside, who was also her guardian. Lionel saw her for the first time in a railway carriage, when she and Mrs. Garside were travelling from London to Cheltenham. There was a slight accident to the train, and Lionel was enabled to show the ladies some little attention. Three weeks after that chance meeting, Lionel proposed in form for the hand of Mr. Garside’s niece.

Lionel’s proposal was very favourably received, for Mr. Garside was prudence itself, and young men worth twenty thousand pounds are not to be met with every day. Very wisely, however, he stipulated that the lovers should wait a year before fastening themselves irrevocably together.

So Lionel, after spending two months in London, where he had an opportunity of seeing Edith every day, set out on his travels. In ten months from the date of his departure he was to come back and claim her for his wife. He left the Continent and the ordinary lines of tourist travel to be done by Edith and himself after marriage, and started direct for America. Cities and city life on the other side of the Atlantic did not detain him long. He panted for the wild, free life and noble sports of the prairies and mountain slopes of the Far West. He spent six happy months with his rifle and an Indian guide on the extreme borders of civilized life. Then he crossed the Rocky Mountains, and found himself, after a time, at San Francisco. There letters from home awaited him. One of the first that he opened told him of the failure of the bank in which the whole of his legacy, except a few hundred pounds, had been deposited. Lionel Dering was a ruined man.

One morning, about three months later, Lionel was ushered into the private office of Mr. Garside, in Old Broad Street, City. The rich merchant shook hands with him, and was polite but freezing. Lionel went at once to the object of his visit. “You have heard of my loss, Mr. Garside?” he said.

“I have, and am very sorry for it,” said the merchant.

“I have saved nothing from the wreck but a few hundred pounds.

Under these circumstances, I come to you, as Miss West's guardian, to tell you that I give up at once, and unreservedly, all pretensions to that lady's hand. I absolve her freely and entirely from the promise she made me. Miss West is an heiress : I am a poor man : we have no longer anything in common."

"Very gentlemanly, Mr. Dering—very gentlemanly, indeed. But only what I should have expected from *you*."

Lionel cut him short somewhat impatiently. "You will greatly oblige me—for the last time—by giving this note to Miss West. I wish her to understand, direct from myself, the motives by which I have been actuated. This is hardly a place," looking round the office, "in which to talk of love, or even of affection ; but, in simple justice to myself, I may say—and I think you will believe me—that the feelings with which I regarded Miss West when I first spoke to you twelve months ago, are utterly unchanged, and, so far as a fallible human being may speak with certainty, they will remain unchanged. I think I have nothing more to say."

But Lionel's note never reached Edith West. When Mr. Garside had finished recounting to his wife the details of his interview with "that strange young man," he gave her the note to give to Edith ; but the giving of it was accompanied by a look which his wife was not slow to comprehend. The note was never alluded to again between husband and wife, but somehow it failed to reach the hands for which it was intended. Edith was simply told by her guardian that Mr. Dering, with a high-minded feeling which did him great credit, had broken off the engagement. "He is a poor man—a very poor man, my dear," said Mr. Garside, "and he has the good sense to know that you are not calculated for a poor man's wife."

"How does he know that—or you—or anybody?" flashed out Edith. "But Lionel Dering never made use of those words, uncle. They are an addition of your own."

Nevertheless, the one great bitter fact still remained, that her lover had given her up. "If he had only called to see me—or even written!" she said to herself. But days, weeks, months, passed away, and there came no further sign from Lionel. So Edith locked up her love, as some sacred thing, in the innermost casket of her heart, and the name that was sweeter to her than all other earthly names, never passed her lips after that day except in her prayers.

Lionel was not long in making up his mind as to his future course. He had still two or three hundred pounds in ready money, and one small plot of ground that he could truly call his own. The tiny estate in question was known as Gatehouse Farm, and consisted of nothing more than an old-fashioned, tumble-down house, terribly out of repair ; an orchard of tolerable dimensions, and about twenty acres of poorish grass-land ; the whole being situated in a remote corner of the north-

east coast of England. This modest estate had been his father's sole patrimony, and for that father's sake Lionel had long ago resolved never to part from it. He had visited it once or twice when quite a boy, and from that time it had lived in his memory as a pleasant recollection. To this spot he made up his mind that he would retire for awhile. Here he would shut himself up from the world, and, like King Arthur, "heal him of his wounds." He confessed to himself that he was slightly hipped; a little at odds with Fortune. The ordinary objects and ambitions of his age, which, under other circumstances would probably have found him an eager partisan, had, for the present at least, lost their savour. He was not without friends—good friends, who would have been willing and able to help him on in any career he might have chosen to adopt, but just at that time all their propositions seemed equally distasteful to him. Ambition for the moment was dead within him. All he asked was to be allowed to drop quietly out of the circle of those who knew him, and cherish, or cure, in a solitude of his own seeking, those inward hurts for which Time is the sole physician.

As it happened, the tenant of Gatehouse Farm was lately dead; there was, consequently, nothing to stand in the way of its immediate occupation by Lionel. It was neither a very picturesque nor a very comfortable residence, but sufficiently the latter to satisfy its owner's simple wants. Its upper story consisted of four or five bedrooms. Downstairs was a large and commodious kitchen, together with a house-room, or, as we should call it, a parlour. This latter room was chosen by Lionel for his own particular den. It had white-washed walls, and two diamond-paned windows of dull thick glass, but the floor was made of splendid oaken planks. The walls Lionel left as he found them, except that over the fireplace he hung a portrait of Edith, and his two favourite rifles; but on the floor he spread two or three skins of wild animals, trophies of his prowess in the chase. In a corner near the fireplace, handy to reach, were the twenty or thirty authors whom he had brought with him to be the companions of his solitude. In the opposite corner was the only article de luxe to be found in the house: a splendid cottage piano, of Erard's build.

The dead and gone builder of the house, whose initials, with the date 1685, were still conspicuous on a tablet over the front door, had never been troubled with that mania for the picturesque in nature and art about which we moderns are perpetually prating. In its own little way his house was intensely ugly, and he had persistently built it with its back to the only fine view that could be seen from its windows in any direction. Even after all these years, there was not another house within a mile of it. The only point of habitable life visible from it was the lighthouse. But it was this solitariness, this isolation from the world, which formed its great feature of attraction in the eyes of Lionel. One other attraction it had for him. You had only to cross a couple

of small fields, and follow, for a hundred yards or more, a climbing foot-way that led across a patch of sandy common, and then, all at once, you saw spread out, far and wide before you, the ever-glorious sea.

To this place came Lionel Dering in less than a month after writing his last letter to Edith West, and here he had since stayed. Two farm labourers and one middle-aged woman constituted the whole of his household. What further labour he might require in his farming operations, he hired. He rose at five o'clock in summer and at six in winter. From the time he got up till two o'clock he worked as hard as any of his own men. The remainder of the day he claimed for his own private uses. He ploughed, he sowed, he reaped. At one time he planted potatoes, at another he dug them up; and nowhere within a score of miles were such fine standard-roses to be seen as at Gatehouse Farm. He found some land to let conveniently near his own small patch, and he hired it. At the end of his second year at the farm he calculated his profits at one hundred and eighty pounds, and was perfectly satisfied.

Lionel saw no company, and never went into society. He was well known to the lighthouse-keepers and to most of the boatmen. With them he would talk freely enough. Their racy sayings, their homely, vigorous diction, their simple mode of life, pleased him. When talking with them he forgot, for a time, himself and his own thoughts, and the change did him good. Not that there was anything of the melancholy, love-sick swain about Lionel—any morbid brooding over his own disappointment, and troubles. No one ever saw him otherwise than cheerful. He was perfectly healthy both in mind and body. Nevertheless, his solitary mode of life, and his persistent isolation of himself from his friends and equals, all tended to throw him back upon his own thoughts, to make him habitually self-introspective, to confirm him in a growing habit of mental analysis.

Whatever the state of the weather, Lionel hardly ever let a day pass without taking a long, solitary ramble into the country for eight or ten miles. Then he had his books, and his piano—which latter was, perhaps, the greatest consolation of his solitude—and the luxury of his own lonely musings as he sat and smoked, hour after hour, with unlighted lamp, and marked how the glowing cinders shaped themselves silently to the fashion of his thoughts.

Two years had by no means sufficed to tire Lionel Dering of his solitary life. In fact, he grew to like it better, to cling to it more emphatically, every day. It satisfied his present needs and ambitions, and that was all he asked. Calmly indifferent, he allowed himself to drift slowly onward towards a future in whose skies there seemed for him no bright bow of promise—nothing but the unbroken greyness of an autumn day that has neither wind, nor sunshine, nor any change.

CHAPTER III.

THE FOUNDATION OF A FRIENDSHIP.

NOTWITHSTANDING Dr. Bell's hopeful prognostications, it seemed very doubtful whether Mr. Tom Bristow would ever leave Gatehouse Farm alive. "I did not think his hull was quite so badly damaged as it is," said the worthy doctor, who had formerly been in the navy, to Lionel. "And his figure-head has certainly been terribly knocked about. But he's an A I craft, and I can't help thinking that he'll weather the storm."

And weather the storm he did—thanks to good nursing and a good constitution. When he once took a turn for the better, his progress towards recovery was rapid. But September had come and gone, and the frosts of early winter lay white on meadow and fold, before the doctor's grey pony ceased calling at Gatehouse Farm on its daily rounds. Long before this time, however, a feeling of more than ordinary friendship had grown up between Lionel Dering and Tom Bristow. The points of dissimilarity in the characters of the two men were very marked, but it may be that they liked each other none the less on that account. In any case, this dissimilarity of disposition lent a piquancy to their friendship which it would not otherwise have possessed.

But who and what was this Mr. Tom Bristow?

The account which he gave of himself to Lionel, one afternoon, when far advanced towards recovery, was somewhat vague and meagre; but it more than satisfied the master of Gatehouse Farm, who was one of the least inquisitive of mortals; and, for the present, it will have to satisfy the reader also.

They were sitting on a rustic bench just outside the farm porch, basking in the genial September sunshine. Lionel had his meerschaum between his lips, and was fondling the head of his favourite dog, Osric. Tom Bristow, who never smoked, was busy with a piece of boxwood and a pocket-knife. Little by little he was fashioning the wood into a capital but slightly caricatured likeness of worthy Dr. Bell—a likeness which the jovial medico would be the first to recognize and laugh at when finished. Tom was a slim-built, aquiline-nosed, fair-complexioned, young fellow; rather under than over the ordinary height; and looking younger than he really was—he was six-and-twenty years old—by reason of his perfectly smooth and close-shaven face, which cherished not the slightest growth of whiskers, beard, or moustache. Tom's first action on coming to his senses after his accident was to put his hand to his chin, just then bristling with a stubble of several days' growth; and his first words to the startled nurse were, "My dear madam, I shall feel greatly obliged by your sending for a barber." His eyes were blue, full of vivacity, and keenly observant of all that went on around him.

He had a very good-natured smile, which showed off to advantage a very white and even set of teeth. His hands and feet were small, and he was rather inclined to be proud of them. His dress, while studiously plain in appearance, was made of the best materials, and owed its origin to one of the most famous of London tailors.

"Dering," said Tom suddenly—they had been sitting for full five minutes without a word—"it is five weeks to-day since you saved my life."

"What a memory you have!"

"Seeing that one's life is not saved every day, I may be excused for remembering the fact, unimportant though it may seem to others. It is five weeks to-day since I was brought to Gatehouse Farm, and during all that time you have never asked me a question about myself or my antecedents. You don't even know whether you have been entertaining a soldier, a sailor, a tinker, a tailor, a what's-his-name, or a thief."

"I didn't wait to ask myself any question of that kind when I went down the cliff in search of you, and I don't see why I need trouble myself now."

"As a matter of simple justice both to yourself and me, the mysterious stranger will now throw off his mystery, and appear in the commonplace garb of real life."

"I wouldn't bother if I were you," said Lionel. "Your object just now is to get thoroughly well. Never mind anything else."

"There's no time like the time present. I'm ashamed of myself for not having spoken to you before."

"If that's the matter with you, I know you must have your say. Proceed, worthy young man, with your narrative, and get it over as quickly as possible."

"I was born at a little town in the midland counties," began Tom. "My father was chief medical practitioner in the place, and attended all the swells of the neighbourhood. His intention from the first was to bring me up to the law; so, as soon as I was old enough, he had me articled to old Hoskyns, his bosom friend, and the chief solicitor in the little town. I didn't like the law—in fact, I hated it; but there seemed no better prospect for me at that time, so I submitted to my fate without a murmur. My father died when I was seventeen, leaving me a fortune of six thousand pounds. I stayed quietly on with Hoskyns till I was twenty-one. The day I was of age, the old gentleman called me into his private room, congratulated me on having attained my majority, and asked me in what way I intended to invest my six thousand pounds. 'I am not going to invest it: I am going to speculate with it,' was my answer. The old lawyer looked at me as if I were a madman. 'Going to speculate in what?' he asked faintly. 'Going to speculate on the Stock Exchange,' was my reply. Well, the old gentleman raved and stormed, and talked to me as though I were

a son of his own, even hinting at a possible partnership in time to come. But my mind had long been made up, and nothing he had to say could move me. It seemed to me that in my six thousand pounds I had the foundation of a fortune which might in time grow into something colossal. It is true that the course I had laid down for myself was not without its risks. It was quite possible that instead of building up a large fortune, I should lose the little one I had already. Well, should that black day ever come, it would be time enough then to think of going back to Hoskyns, and of settling down for life as the clerk of a provincial lawyer.

"My father's death left me without any relations, except some far away cousins whom I had never seen. There was nothing to keep me in my native town, so I set out for London, with many prophecies of coming ruin ringing in my ears. I hired a couple of cheap rooms in a quiet city court, and set up in business as a speculator, and to that business I have stuck ever since."

"Which is as much as to say that you have been successful in it, said Lionel.

"I *have* been successful in it. Not perhaps quite so successful as my sanguine youthful hopes led me to believe I should be; but still sufficiently so to satisfy myself that in choosing such a career I did not choose altogether unwisely."

"But how is it possible," said Lionel: "that you, a raw country lad of one and twenty, could go and settle down in the great world of London; and, without experience of your own, or any friendly hand to guide you, could venture to play at a game which exercises some of the keenest intellects of the age—and not only venture to play at it, but to rise from it a winner?"

"The simplest answer to that question would be, that I did do it. But really, after all, the matter is not a very difficult one. I have always been guided by three or four very simple rules, and so long as I stick to them, I don't think I can go very far amiss. I never invest all my money in one or even two speculations, however promising they may seem. I never run great risks for the sake of problematical great profits. Let my profits be small but sure, and I am quite content. Lastly, I put my money, as far as possible, into concerns that I can examine personally for myself, even though I should have to make a journey of three hundred miles to do it. See the affair with *your own* eyes, judge it for yourself, and then leave it for your common sense to decide whether you shall put your money into it or no. In all such professions, natural aptitude—the gift that we possess almost unconsciously to ourselves—is the grand secret of success."

"Success in your case means that you are on the high road to being a millionaire?"

"Now you are laughing at me."

"Not at all. I am only judging you by your own standard."

"And is the standard such a very poor one?"

"Not a poor one at all, as the world goes. I should like very much to be a millionaire."

"To say that I am not richer to-day than I was the day I was twenty-one would not be true," said Tom, with a demure smile. "I am years and years, half a lifetime at the very least, from being a millionaire—if, indeed, I ever live to be one. But I no longer live in two cheap rooms in the city, and dine at an eating-house for fifteen pence. I have very nice chambers just out of Piccadilly, where you must look me up when you are next in town. I belong to a club where I have an opportunity of meeting good people—by 'good people' I mean people who may some day be useful to me in my struggle through life. Finally, I ride my hack in the Park two or three afternoons a week during the season, and am on bowing terms with a duchess."

"I can no longer doubt that you are a rising man," said Lionel, with a laugh.

"My head is full of schemes of one kind or another," said Tom, a little wearily. "Or rather it was full of them before I met with that confounded accident. In one or the other of those schemes the duchess will play her part like any other pawn that may be on my chess-board at the time. There is no keener speculator in the whole City of London than her Grace of Leamington."

"What a martyrdom it must seem to you to be shut up here, in this dull old house, so far away from that exciting life you have learned to love so well!"

"A martyrdom, Dering? It is anything but that. Had I been well in health, I can't tell what my feelings might have been. I should probably have considered it a waste of time to have spent a month, either here or anywhere else, in absolute idleness. But being ill, and having just been dragged back, by main force as it were, from Death's very door, I cannot tell you how grateful, how soothing to me is the quietude of this old spot. If, now and then, when I feel better and stronger, there come moments when I long to glance over the money article of *The Times*, or to write a long, impatient letter to my broker in London, there are days and nights when such things have no longer the faintest interest for me—times when bare life itself seems a burden almost too heavy for endurance, and all my ambitious schemes and speculations nothing more than a tissue of huge mistakes."

"Your old interest in everyday matters will gradually come back to you as you grow better," said Lionel, "and with it will come the desire to be up and doing."

"I suppose you are right," said Tom. "It would never do for a little illness to change the plans and settled aims of a lifetime."

"No chance of your settling down here at Gatehouse Farm as Hermit Number Two?"

Tom shook his head and laughed. "Do you know, Dering," he said, "that you are one of the greatest riddles, one of the most incomprehensible fellows, it was ever my fortune to meet with! But, pardon me," he added hastily. "Of all men in the world, you are the one to whom I ought least to say such words."

"Nothing of the kind," said Lionel, with a smile. "I like your frankness. I am aware that many people look upon me as a sort of harmless lunatic, though what there is so incomprehensible about me I am at a loss to imagine."

"You will forgive me for saying so," said Tom, "but to me it seems such an utter pity to see a man of your education and abilities wasting the best years of his life in a place like this, with no society but that of fishermen and boors: to see a man, young and strong in health, so utterly indifferent to all the ordinary claims of civilized life—to all the aims and ambitions by which the generality of his fellow men are actuated, to the bright career which he might carve out for himself, if he would but take the trouble to do so."

"Ah, that is just it, mon ami: if I would but take the trouble to do so! But is the game really worth the candle? To me, I confess that it is not."

Tom shrugged his shoulders.

"I know that you can afford to pity me—that you look upon me as a sort of good natured imbecile."

"No—no!" in energetic protest from Tom.

"But what have you to pity me for?" asked Lionel, without heeding the interruption. "I have enough to eat and drink, I have a roof to cover me, and a bed to sleep on. In these important matters I should be no better off if I had ten thousand a year. As for the society of boors and fishermen, believe me, there is more strength of character, more humour, more pathos, more patient endurance of the ills of this life, and a firmer trust in Providence, among these simple folk than I ever found among those whom you would term my equals in the social scale. Then your ambitions and aims, dignify them with what fine names you will, what are they, nine times out of ten, but the mere vulgar desire to grow rich as quickly as possible! So long as I can earn my bread by the sweat of my brow, and owe no man a penny, I am perfectly satisfied."

"Argue as you will, Dering, this is neither the place nor the position for a man like you."

"So long as the place and position suit me, and I them, we shall remain in perfect accord, and no longer," said Lionel. "I never said it was my intention to live a hermit all my life; but at present I am perfectly satisfied."

Again and again, before Tom Bristow's enforced stay at Gatehouse Farm came to an end, was the same subject broached between him and

Lionel, but always with the same result. As Lionel often said to himself, he was utterly without ambition. He was like a man whose active career in the world was at an end who knowing that life could have no more prizes in store for him, had settled down quietly in his old age, content to let the race go by, and wait uncomplainingly for the end. It is probable, nay, almost certain, that had his uneventful life at Gatehouse Farm been destined to last much longer, old desires and feelings would gradually have awakened within him; that in time he would have found his way again into that busy world on which he had turned his back in a transient fit of disgust, and there have fought the fight before him like the good and true man he really was at heart.

As days went on, Tom Bristow's strength gradually came back to him, and with it came a restlessness, and a desire to be up and doing that was inherent in his disposition. Long before he was allowed down stairs he had discovered that the old case clock in the kitchen had a trick of indicating the hours peculiar to itself, sometimes omitting to strike them at all, and sometimes going as high as a hundred and fifty; besides which, its qualities as a timekeeper were not to be depended on. To Tom's orderly and accurate mind the old clock was a great annoyance, so the very first day he came down stairs he took the works entirely to pieces. Then, little by little, as his strength would allow him, he cleaned them, put them together again, regulated them, and finally turned the old clock into so accurate a timekeeper that Mrs. Bevis, Lionel's housekeeper, was quite disturbed in her mind for several days, because she had no longer any mental calculations to go through before she could be really sure as to the hour. Then, after he had got still stronger, Tom went systematically through all the locks in the house, repairing and putting into thorough working order all that required it. Then he mended the kitchen window, and put up a couple of shelves for Mrs. Bevis in the dairy—all done as neatly as any workman could have done them. In little jobs of this sort Tom took great delight now that he had so many leisure hours on his hands.

But presently there began to arrive at Gatehouse Farm an intermittent stream of letters, newspapers, pamphlets, and blue books, the like of which had never been known within the memory of the oldest man in the village. Lionel himself stared sometimes when he saw them, but they all had a business interest for Tom, who now began to spend a great portion of his time in receiving and answering letters. Such books as there happened to be in Lionel's small library that had any interest for him—and they were very few indeed—he exhausted during the early days of his illness. How a sensible man could possibly prefer Browning to the money article of *The Times*, or an essay by Elia to the account of a great railway meeting, was matter of intense wonderment to Tom. Poets, novelists, essayists, should be left to women, and to men whose fortunes were already made: but for men

with a career still before them ; for pushing, striving men of the world, such reading was a sheer waste of valuable time.

But let Tom Bristow be as worldly-minded as he might be, Lionel Dering could not help liking him, and it was with sincere regret he saw the day drawing near when he and his new-found friend must part. With all Tom's worldly shrewdness and keen love of money getting, there was a rare unselfishness about him; and it was probably this fine trait of character, so rare in a man of his calibre, that drew Lionel so closely to him. As for Tom, he had never met with anyone before whose character interested him so profoundly as did that of Dering. Out of that interest grew a liking almost brotherly in its warmth for the strange young hermit of Gatehouse Farm. When the day came for these two men to part, they felt as if they had known each other for years. At the last moment they shook hands without a word. Tears stood in Tom's eyes. Lionel would not trust himself to speak for fear of breaking down. One long last grip, then the horses sprang forward, and Tom was gone. Lionel turned slowly indoors, feeling more lonely and sad at heart than he had done since the day his darling Edith was lost to him for ever.

C H A P T E R I V.

GOLDEN TIDINGS.

DAYS and weeks passed over before the feeling of loneliness caused by Tom's departure from Gatehouse Farm quite wore itself away—before Lionel got thoroughly back into his old contented frame of mind, and felt again in the daily routine of his quiet homely life that simple satisfaction which had been his before the night of the storm. But as the lengthening days of autumn deepened slowly onward towards Christmas, the restlessness and gloom that had shrouded his life of late began to vanish little by little, so that, by-and-by, as Mrs. Bevis joyfully told her husband, "Master was beginning to get quite like his old self again."

The farm preparations for winter were all made. Lionel, looking forward to a long period of leisure, had decided to begin the study of Italian. He had been into Melcham to buy the necessary books, and got back home just as candles were being lighted. On the table he found two letters which had arrived by the afternoon post. One of the two was deeply bordered with black ; the other he recognized at once as being from Tom Bristow. He opened Tom's letter first.

In a few hurried lines Tom told Lionel how he had been laid up again from a severe cold which had settled on his chest, and how the doctors had ordered that he should start at once for Algeria with a view of wintering there. He wrote rather dolefully, as one whose business concerns would be altogether disarranged by this imperious mandate, which, nevertheless, he dare not disobey. "I hope to come back next

spring with the swallows, thoroughly rejuvenated," he wrote ; "when I will not fail to look you up at dear old Gatehouse Farm."

Lionel took up the second letter with some curiosity. But when he saw that it bore the Duxley post-mark, he guessed in a moment the tidings it was about to tell him. Nor was he mistaken. It told him of the death of his uncle, Arthur St. George, of Park Newton, near Duxley, Midlandshire—and contained an invitation to the funeral, and to the subsequent reading of the dead man's last will and testament.

"This letter is written by my uncle's lawyer," said Lionel to himself. "Why couldn't my cousin Kester write to me?"

It was hardly to be expected that Lionel could either feel or express much sorrow for the death of an uncle whom he had never seen ; whom he only knew by reputation as a man thoroughly selfish and hard-hearted ; who had persistently slighted and ignored his, Lionel's, mother, from the day she ran away from home till the day of her death—and who had been heard to declare, again and again, that neither his sister nor any child of hers should ever touch a penny of his money. Knowing all this, Lionel was surprised to have received even the acknowledgment of an invitation to his uncle's funeral. His cousin Kester was the heir, and would inherit everything. For him, Lionel, to attend as a mourner at the solemn ceremony was to make a hypocrite of himself by assuming a regret which he could not feel.

This Arthur St. George who had just died was Dorothy Dering's eldest brother. He had lived and died a bachelor. The second brother, Geoffrey, had died many years before, leaving one son, Kester, who was adopted by Arthur, and always looked upon as his uncle's heir. Of the youngest brother, Lionel, we already know something. He, too, was a bachelor. He it was who, when over from India on leave of absence, had called upon Mrs. Dering, and had subsequently got that appointment for Lionel which his mother was not willing that he should accept.

While in England, General St. George, who did not believe in family feuds, contrived to bring his two nephews, Lionel and Kester, together. The result was, to a certain extent, a failure. The two young men had never met each other before ; and when, after a week's intercourse, they bade each other good-bye, it is greatly to be doubted whether either of them cared about seeing the other again. Kester, who could make himself very agreeable when he chose to do so, was, as his uncle's heir, inclined to look down upon Lionel, and to treat him with a certain superciliousness which the latter could not readily brook. There was no open rupture between them, but from that time to the present they had never met again.

Before Lionel had quite made up his mind whether he would attend the funeral or not, there came a second note from Mr. Perrins, more imperative than the first one :—"Your cousin, Mr. Kester St. George,

is away on the Continent. I am doubtful whether my notification of your uncle's death will reach him in time to allow of his being at the funeral. You and he are the late Mr. St. George's sole relatives, except General St. George, who is in India. If neither you nor your cousin attend the funeral, your uncle will be followed to the grave by no one of his own blood. But that apart, it is highly desirable that, as a near relative of the deceased gentleman, you should be present at the reading of the will, which is fixed to take place in the blue drawing room at four o'clock on the afternoon of the day of interment."

After this there was nothing left for Lionel but to go.

It was not without a strange commingling of various feelings that Lionel Dering found himself under the roof of a house which had been the home of his ancestors for two hundred years. A stately and venerable old pile, truly. He had often heard his mother talk about it, but till this day he had never seen it. It was something to feel proud of, that he was the scion of a family which could call a place like Park Newton its home.

He was received by Mr. Perrins with a cordiality that was at once grave and respectful. Kester St. George had not arrived; neither had there been any message from him. They waited till the last possible moment, but he did not come. Thus it happened that Lionel found himself in the novel position of chief mourner at the funeral of a man whom he had never even seen. He was glad when the ceremony was over.

Then came the reading of the will. "I wish to goodness my cousin would come, even at this the last moment," said Lionel to the lawyer as they walked together towards the blue drawing-room.

"I don't really know that it matters greatly," replied Mr. Perrins with a significant smile. "I daresay we shall get on very well without Mr. Kester St. George."

Ten minutes later Lionel understood the meaning of the lawyer's strange remark. Ten minutes later he found himself the owner of Park Newton, and the possessor of an income of eleven thousand pounds a year.

It was even so. Everything, with the exception of a few trifling legacies to old servants, that Arthur St. George possessed in the world he had bequeathed without reservation to his nephew, Lionel Dering. The name of Kester St. George was not even mentioned in the will.

"The Park Newton estates have never been entailed," said Mr. Perrins in parenthesis, as he folded up the will. "It was quite competent to the testator to have left the whole of his property to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, had he chosen to do so."

For the moment Lionel was overwhelmed. But when Mr. Perrins had congratulated him, and the doctor had congratulated him, "and the

butler and the housekeeper, old servants of the family, had followed suit, he began to feel as if his good fortune were really a fact.

"Now I can marry Edith," was his first thought.

"It seems more like a dream than anything else," said Lionel to Mr. Perrins a little later on, as the latter stood sipping a glass of dry sherry with the air of a connoisseur.

"I should very much like to dream a similar dream," answered the lawyer.

"But about my cousin Kester St. George,—he was adopted by my uncle after his father's death, and was brought up at Park Newton, and it was understood by everybody that he was to be my uncle's heir?"

"It is entirely Mr. Kester St. George's own fault that he does not stand in your position to-day."

"I fail to understand you."

"For years your uncle's will was made in his favour. Everything was left to him as absolutely as it is now left to you. But about nine months ago your uncle and your cousin had a terrible quarrel. As to how it arose, or what was the cause of it, I know nothing. I can only surmise that your cousin had done something which your uncle felt that he could not forgive. But be that as it may, Mr. Kester St. George was turned out of Park Newton at ten o'clock one night, and forbidden ever to set foot across the threshold again—nor has he ever done so. Next day your uncle sent for me, and in my presence he tore up the old will which had been in existence for years, and substituted in its place the one which I had the honour of reading this afternoon."

That same night saw Lionel Dering in London. He felt that he could neither go back to Gatehouse Farm, nor make any arrangements respecting his new position, till after he had seen Edith West—till after he had seen her and told her that his love was still unchanged, and that there no longer existed any reason why she should not become his wife.

It was past ten o'clock before he got into London. His mind was too much excited either to allow of his going to bed or of his sitting quietly in the hotel. So he lighted a cigar, and set out for a quiet ramble through the streets. After a time he found himself on Westminster Bridge. He stood awhile watching the river as it flowed along so dark and mysterious—watching it, but with thoughts that were far away. Suddenly he became conscious of a dull, confused noise, like the far away murmur of a great crowd. Swiftly the murmur grew, growing and swelling with every moment, till it swelled into a mighty roar from a thousand throats. Then, all at once, there was a flashing of lights, and the trampling of innumerable feet, and three fire-engines went thundering past with yells, and shouts, and hoarse, inarticulate cries from a huge mob that followed hard and fast behind. Lionel

stood back to let this crowd of desperadoes pass,—when all at once, among them, but not of them—borne helplessly along by the press from which he was struggling in vain to free himself, he saw his cousin, Kester St. George. There was a lamp close overhead, and their eyes met for a moment in recognition across a seething mass of the crowd. It was but for a moment, and then Kester was carried away; but in that moment there flashed into his eyes a look of such deadly, fiend-like hate as thrilled Lionel from head to foot. It was a look that once seen could never be forgotten. It chilled Lionel's heart, and, for a time, even blotted out from his thoughts the sweet image of Edith West. He walked back to his hotel, gloomy, ill at ease, and oppressed with strange presentiments of some vague, far-off evil. Even after he fell asleep that look on his cousin's face oppressed him and would not be forgotten. He dreamt that Kester was pursuing him from room to room through the old house at Park Newton. As Kester came in at one door, with that terrible look in his eyes, he, Lionel, passed swiftly out at the opposite door, but on each door-handle, as he touched it, he left behind a stain of blood. The oppression of his dream grew at length too great to be any longer borne, and he awoke shivering with dread, and thankful to find that the blessed daylight was at hand.

(*To be continued.*)

A DIRGE.

Why were you born when the snow was falling?
You should have come to the cuckoo's calling,
Or when grapes are green in the cluster,
Or, at least, when lithe swallows muster
For their far off flying
From summer dying.

Why did you die when the lambs were cropping?
You should have died at the apples' dropping,
When the grasshopper comes to trouble,
And the wheat fields are sodden stubble,
And all winds go sighing
For sweet things dying.

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

SELINA RADCLIFFE'S HOME.

WHAT I am going to tell of took place before my time. But we shall get down to that by-and-by, for I had a good deal to do with the upshot when it came.

About a mile from the Manor, on the way to the Court (which at that time belonged to my father) stood a very old house built of grey stone, and called Sandstone Torr: the "Torr," as every body knew, being a corruption of Tower. It was in a rather wild and solitary spot, much shut in by trees. A narrow lane led to it from the highway, the only road by which a carriage could get up to it: but in taking the field way between the Court and Dyke Manor, over stiles and across a running rivulet or two, you had to pass it close. Sandstone Torr was a rambling, high, and ugly old building, once belonging to the Druids, or some ancient race of that kind, and said to have been mighty and important in its day. The points chiefly remarkable about it now were its age, its lonesome grey walls, covered with lichen, and an amazingly lofty tower, that rose up from the middle of the house and went tapering off at the top like an aspiring sugar loaf.

Sandstone Torr belonged to the Radcliffes. Its occupier was Paul Radcliffe, who had inherited it from his father. He was a rather unsociable man, and seemed to find his sole occupation in farming what little land lay around the Torr and belonged to it. He might have mixed with the gentry of the county, as far as descent went, for the Radcliffes could trace themselves back for ages—up to the Druids, I think, the same as the house: but he did not appear to care about it. Who his wife had been nobody knew. He brought her home one day from London, and she kept herself as close as he did, or closer. She was dead now, and old Radcliffe lived in the Torr with his only son, and a man and maid servant.

Well, in those days there came to stay at Dyke Manor a clergyman, named Elliot, with his daughter Selina. Squire Todhetley was a youngish man then, and he and his mother lived at the Manor together. Mr. Elliot was out of health. He had been overworked for the past twenty years in the poor London parish of which he was curate; and old Mrs. Todhetley asked them to come down for a bit of a change. Change indeed it brought to Mr. Elliot. He died there. His illness, whatever it was, took a sudden and rapid stride onwards, and before he had been at Dyke Manor three weeks he was dead.

Selina Elliot—we have heard the Squire say it many a time—was the sweetest-looking girl that ever the sun shone on. She was homeless now. The best prospect before her was that of going out as

governess. The Elliots were of good descent and Selina had been thoroughly well educated ; but of money she had just none. Old Mrs. Todhetley bid her not be in any hurry ; she was welcome to stay as long as she liked at Dyke Manor. So Selina stayed. It was summer weather then, and she was out and about in the open air all day long : a slight girl, in deep mourning, with a shrinking air that was natural to her.

One afternoon she came in, her bright face all aglow, and her shy eyes eager. Soft brown eyes they were, that had always a sadness in them. I—a little shaver—can remember that, when I knew her in later years. As she sat down on the stool at Mrs. Todhetley's feet, she took off her black straw hat, and began to play nervously with its crape ends.

"My dear, you seem to be in a heat," said Mrs. Todhetley ; a stout old lady, who sat all day long in her easy chair.

"Yes, I ran home fast," said Selina.

"Home from whence ? Where have you been ?"

"I was—near the Torr," replied Selina, with hesitation.

"Near the Torr, child ! That's a long way for you to go strolling alone."

"The wild roses in the hedges there are so lovely," pleaded Selina. "That's why I took to go there at first."

"Took to go there !" repeated the old lady, thinking it an odd phrase. "Do you see anything of the Torr people ? I hope you've not been making intimate with young Stephen Radcliffe," she added, a thought darting into her mind.

"Stephen ? that's the son. No, I never saw him. I think he is away from home."

"That's well. He is by all accounts but a churlish lout of a fellow."

Selina Elliot bent her timid face over the hat, stroking its ribbons with her restless fingers. She was evidently ill at ease. Glancing up presently, she saw the old lady was shutting her eyes for a doze : and that hastened her communication.

"I—I want to tell you something, please, ma'am.—But—I don't like to begin." And, with that, Selina burst into unexpected tears, and the alarmed old lady looked up.

"Why, what ails you, child. Are you hurt ? Has a wasp been at you?"

"Oh no," said Selina, brushing the tears away with fingers that trembled all over. "I—if you please—I think I am going to live at the Torr."

The old lady wondered whether Selina was dreaming. "At the Torr !" said she. "There are no children at the Torr. They don't want a governess at the Torr."

"I am going there to be with Mr. Radcliffe," spoke Selina, in her throat, as if she meant to choke.

"To be with old Radcliffe!—Why, the child's gone cranky! Paul Radcliffe don't need a governess."

"He wants to marry me."

"Mercy upon us!" cried the old lady, lifting both hands in her amazement. And Selina burst into sobs again.

Yes, it was true. Paul Radcliffe, who was fifty years of age, if a day, and had a son over twenty, had been proposing marriage to that bright young girl! They had met in the fields often, it turned out, and Mr. Radcliffe had been making his hay while the sun shone. Everybody went on at her.

"It would be better to go into a prison than into that gloomy Sandstone Torr—a young girl like you, Selina," said Mrs. Todhetley. "It would be sheer madness."

"Why, you'd never go and sacrifice yourself to that old man!" cried the Squire, who was just as outspoken and impulsive and good-hearted then as in these latter years. "He ought to be ashamed of himself. It would be like June and December."

But all they said was of no use in the end. It was not that Selina, poor girl, was in love with Mr. Radcliffe—one could as well have fancied her in love with the grizzly old bear, just then exhibiting himself at Church Dykely in a travelling caravan. But it was her position. Without money, without a home, without a resource of any kind for the future, save that of teaching for her bread, the prospect of becoming mistress of Sandstone Torr was something fascinating.

"I do so dislike the thought of spending my whole life in teaching!" she pleaded in apology, the bitter tears streaming down her face. "You cannot tell what it is to feel dependent."

"I'd rather sweep chimneys than marry Paul Radcliffe if I were a pretty young girl like you," stormed the old lady.

"Since papa died you don't know what the feeling has been," sobbed Selina. "Many a night have I lain awake with the misery of knowing that I had no claim to a place in the wide world."

"I am sure you are welcome to stay here," said the Squire.

"Yes; as long as I am here myself," added his mother. "After that—well, I suppose it wouldn't be proper for you to stay."

"You are all kindness; I shall never meet with such friends again; and I know that I am welcome to stay as long as I like," she answered in the saddest of tones. "But the time of my departure must come sometime; and though the world lies before me, there is no refuge for me in it. It is very good of Mr. Radcliffe to offer to make me his wife and to give me a home at the Torr."

"Oh, is it, though!" retorted the Squire. "Trust him for knowing on which side his bread's buttered."

"He is of good descent ; he has a large income ——"

"Six hundred a year," interrupted the Squire, slightly.

"Yes, I am aware that it cannot appear much to you," she meekly said ; "but to me it seems unbounded. And that is apart from the house and land."

"The house and land must both go to Stephen."

"Mr. Radcliffe told me that."

"As to the land, it's only a few acres ; nothing to speak of," went on the Squire. "I'd as soon boast of my gooseberry bushes. And he can leave all his money to Stephen if he likes. In my opinion, the chances are that he will."

"He says he shall always behave fairly by me," spoke poor Selina.

"Why, you'd have a step-son older than yourself, Selina!" put in the old lady. "And I don't like him—that Stephen Radcliffe. He's no better than he should be. I saw him one day whipping a poor calf a'most to death."

Well, they said all they could against it ; ten thousand times more than is written down here. Selina wavered : she was not an obstinate girl, but tractable as you please. Only—she had no homestead on the face of the earth, and Mr. Radcliffe offered her one. He did not possess youth, it is true ; he had never been handsome : but he was of irreproachable descent—and Selina had a little corner of ambition in her heart ; and, above all, he had a good income.

It was rather curious that the dread of this girl's life, the one dread above all other dreads, was that of *poverty*. In the earlier days of her parents, when she was a little girl and her mother was alive, and the parson's pay was just seventy pounds a year, they had had such a terrible struggle with poverty that a horror of it was implanted in the child's mind for ever. Her mother died of it. She had become weaker and weaker, and perished slowly away for the lack of those comforts that money alone could have bought. Mr. Elliot's stipend was increased later : but the fear of poverty never left Selina : and now, by his death, she was again brought face to face with it. That swayed her ; and her choice was made.

Old Mrs. Todhetley and the Squire protested that they washed their hands of the marriage. But they could only wash them gingerly, and, so to say, in private. For, after all, excepting that Paul Radcliffe was more than old enough to be Selina's father, and had grizzly hair and a grown-up son, there was not so much to be said against it. She would be Mrs. Radcliffe of Sandstone Torr, and might take her standing in the county.

Sandstone Torr, dull and gloomy, and buried amidst its trees, was enough to put a lively man in mind of a prison. You entered it by a kind of shut-in porch, the outer door of which was always chained

back in the day-time. The inner door opened into a long, narrow passage, and that again to a circular stone hall with a heavy ceiling, just like a large dark watch box. Four or five doors led off from it to different passages and rooms. This same kind of round place was on all the landings, shut in just as the hall was, and with no light, save what might be afforded from the doors of the passages or rooms leading to it. It was the foundation of the tower, and the house was built round it. All the walls were of immense thickness ; the rooms were low, and had beams running across most of them. But the rooms were many in number, and the place altogether had a massive and grand air, telling of its past importance. It had one senseless point in it—there was no entrance to the tower. The tower had neither staircase nor door of access. People said what a grand view might be obtained if you could but get to the top of it, or even get up to look through the small slits of windows in its walls. But the builder had forgotten the staircase, and there it ended.

Mr. Radcliffe took his wife straight home from the church door. Selina had never before been inside the Torr, and the gloominess of its aspect struck upon her unpleasantly. Leading her down the long passage into the circular hall, he opened one of its doors, and she found herself in a sitting-room. The furniture was good but heavy ; the carpet, a Turkey, was nearly colourless with age, but soft to the feet ; the window looked out only upon trees. A man servant, who had admitted them, followed them in, asking his master if he had any orders.

"Send Holt here," said Mr. Radcliffe. "This is the parlour, Selina."

A thin, respectable woman of middle age made her appearance. She looked with curiosity at the young lady her master had brought in : at her wedding dress of grey silk, at the pretty face blushing under the white straw bonnet.

"Mrs. Radcliffe, Holt. Show your mistress her rooms."

The woman curtsied, and led the way through another passage to the stairs ; and into a bedroom and sitting-room above, that opened into one another.

"I've aired 'em well, ma'am," were the first words she said. "They've never been used since the late mistress's time, for master has slept in a little chamber near Master Stephen's. "But he's coming back here now."

"Is this the drawing-room?" asked Selina, observing that the furniture, though faded, was prettier and lighter than that in the room downstairs.

"Dear no, ma'am ! The drawing-room is below and on t'other side of the house entirely. It's never gone into from one month's end to another. Master and Mr. Stephen uses nothing but the parlour. We call this the Pine Room."

"The Pine Room!" echoed Selina. "Why?"

"Because it looks out on them pines, I suppose," replied Holt.

Selina looked from the window, and saw a row of dark pines waving before the higher trees behind them. The view beyond was completely shut in by these trees; they were very close to the house: it almost seemed as though a long arm might have touched them from where she stood. Anything more dull than this aspect could not well be found. Selina leaned from the window to look below: and saw a gravel path with some grass on either side it, but no flowers.

It was a week later. Mr. Radcliffe sat in the parlour, busily examining some samples of new wheat, when there came a loud ring at the outer bell, and presently Stephen Radcliffe walked in. The father and son resembled each other. Both were tall and strongly built, and had the same rugged cast of features: men of few words and ungenial manners. But while Mr. Radcliffe's face was not an unpleasing one, Stephen's had a most sullen—some might have said evil—expression. In his eyes there was a slight cast, and his dull brown hair was never tidy. Some time before this, when the father and son had a quarrel, Stephen had gone off into Cornwall to stay with his mother's relations. This was his first appearance back again.

"Is it you, Stephen!" cried Mr. Radcliffe, without offering to shake hands: for the house was never given to ceremony.

"Yes, it's me," replied Stephen, who generally talked more like a boor than a gentleman, particularly in his angry moods. "It's about time I came home, I think, when such a notice as this appears in the public papers."

He took a newspaper from his pocket, and laid it before his father, pointing with his fore-finger to an announcement. It was that of Mr. Radcliffe's marriage.

"Well?" said Mr. Radcliffe.

"Is that true or a hoax?"

"True."

Stephen caught the paper up again, tore it in two, and flung it across the room.

"What the devil made you go and do such a thing as that?"

"Softly, Ste. Keep a civil tongue in your head. I am my own master."

"At your age!" growled Stephen. "There's no fool like an old fool."

"If you don't like it, you can go back to where you came from," said Mr. Radcliffe quietly, turning the wheat from one of the sample-bags out on the table.

Stephen went to the window, and stood there looking at that agreeable prospect beyond—the trees—his hands in his pockets, his back to his father, and swearing to himself awfully. It would not do to quarrel

implacably with the old man, for his money was at his own disposal : and, if incensed too greatly, he might possibly take the extreme step of leaving it away from him. But Stephen Radcliffe's heart was good to turn his father out of doors there and then, and appropriate the money to himself at once, if he only had the power. "No fool like an old fool !" he again muttered. "Where is the cat ?"

"Where's who ?" cried Mr. Radcliffe, looking up from his wheat.

"The woman you've gone and made yourself a world's spectacle with."

"Ste, my lad, this won't do. Keep a civil tongue in your head, as I bid you ; or go where you may make it a foul one. For by heaven!" —and Mr. Radcliffe's passion broke out and he rose from his seat menacingly—"I'll not tolerate this."

Stephen hardly ever remembered his father to have shown passion before. He did not like it. They had gone on so very quietly together, until that quarrel just spoken of, and Stephen had had his own way, and ruled, so to say, in all things, for his father was easy, that this outbreak was something new. It might not do to give further provocation then.

He was standing as before in sullen silence, his hands in his trousers' pockets and the skirts of his short brown velveteen coat thrown back, and Mr. Radcliffe had sat down to the bags again, when the door opened, and some one came in. Stephen turned. He saw a pretty young girl in black, with some books in her delicate hands. Just for an instant he wondered who the young girl could be : and then the thought flashed over him that "the woman" his father had married might have a grown up daughter. Selina had been unpacking her trunks upstairs, and arranging her things in their drawers and closets. She hesitated on her way to the book-case when she saw the stranger.

"My son Stephen, Selina. Ste, Mrs. Radcliffe."

Stephen Radcliffe for a moment forgot his sullenness and his temper. He did nothing but stare. Was his father playing a joke on him ? He had pictured the new wife (though he knew not why) as a woman of mature age : this was a child. As she timidly held out the only hand she could extricate from the load of books, he saw the wedding-ring on her finger. Meeting her hand ungraciously and speaking never a word, he turned to the window again. Selina put the books down in a stack to be disposed in their shelves later, and quitted the room.

"This is even worse folly than I dreamed of," began Stephen, facing his father. "She's nothing but a child."

"She is close upon twenty."

"Why, there may be children !" broadly roared out Stephen. " You must have been mad when you did such a deed as this."

"Mad or sane, it's done, Stephen. And I should do it again tomorrow without asking your leave. Understand that."

Yes, it was done. Rattling the silver in his pockets, Stephen Radcliffe felt that, and that there was no undoing it. Here was this young stepmother planted down at the Torr; and if he and she could not hit it off together, it was he who would have to walk out of the house. For full five minutes Stephen mentally rehearsed all the oaths he remembered. Presently he spoke.

"It was a fair trick, wasn't it, that you should forbid my marrying, and go and do the same thing yourself!"

"I did not object to your marrying, Ste: I objected to the girl. Gibbon's daughter is not one to match with you. You are a Radcliffe."

Stephen scoffed. Nobody had ever been able to beat into him any sense of self-importance. Pride of birth, pride in his family were elements unknown to Stephen's nature. He had a great love of money to make up for it.

"What's good for the goose is good for the gander," he retorted, plunging into a communication he had resolved to make. "You have been taking a wife on your score, and I have taken one on mine."

Mr. Radcliffe looked keenly at Stephen. "You have married Gibbon's girl?"

"I have."

"When? Where?"

"In Cornwall. She followed me there."

The elder man felt himself in a dilemma. He did care for his son, and he resented this alliance bitterly for Stephen's sake. Gibbon was gamekeeper to Sir Peter Chanasse, and had formerly been out-door servant at the Torr; and this daughter of his, Rebecca—or Becca, as she was commonly called—was a girl quite beneath Stephen. Neither was she a lovable young woman in herself; but hard, and sly, and bony. How it was that Stephen had fancied her, Mr. Radcliffe could not understand. But—having stolen a march on Stephen himself, in regard to his own marriage, he did not feel much at liberty to resent Stephen's. It was done, too—as he had just observed of his own—and it could not be undone.

"Well, Stephen, I am more vexed for your sake than I care to say. It strikes me you will live to repent it."

"That's my look out," replied Stephen. "I am going to bring her home."

"Home! Where?"

"Here."

Mr. Radcliffe was silent; perhaps the assertion startled him.

"I don't want Gibbon's daughter here, Stephen. There's no room for her."

"Plenty of room, and to spare."

So there was; for the old house was large. But Mr. Radcliffe had not been thinking of space.

"I can't have her. There! You may make your home where you like."

"This is my home," said Stephen.

"And it may be still, if you like. But it's not hers. Two women in a house, each wanting to be mistress, wouldn't do. Now no noise, Ste, *I won't have Gibbon's girl here*. I've not been used to consort with people who have been my servants."

It is one thing to make a resolution, and another to keep it. Before twelve months had gone by, Mr. Radcliffe's firmly spoken words had come to naught; and Stephen had brought his wife into the Torr and two babies—for Mrs. Stephen had presented him with two at once. Selina was upstairs then with an infant of her own, and very ill. The world thought she was going to die.

The opportunity was a grand one for Madam Becca, and she seized upon it. When Selina came about again, after months spent in confinement, she found, so to say, no place for her. Becca was in her place; mistress, and ruler, and all. Stephen behaved to her like the lout he was; Becca, a formidable woman of towering height, alternately snapped at, and ignored her. Old Radcliffe did not interfere: he seemed not to see that anything was amiss. Poor Selina could only sit up in that apartment that Holt had called the Pine Room, and let her tears fall on her baby-boy, and whisper all her griefs into his unconscious ear. She was refined and timid and shrinking: but once she spoke to her husband.

"Treat you with contempt?—don't let you have any will of your own?—thwart you in all ways?" he repeated. "Who says it, Selina?"

"Oh, it is so; you may see that it is, if you only will notice," she said, looking up at him imploringly through her tears.

"I'll speak to Stephen. I knew there'd be a fuss if that Becca came here. But you are not as strong to bustle about as she is, Selina: let her take the brunt of the management off you. What does it matter?"

What did it matter?—that was Mr. Radcliffe's chief opinion on the point: and had it been only a question of management it would not have mattered. He spoke to Stephen, telling him that he and his wife must make things pleasanter for Mrs. Radcliffe, than, as it seemed, they were doing. The consequence was, that Stephen and Becca took a convenient occasion of attacking Selina; calling her a sneak, a tell-tale, and a wolf in sheep's clothing; and pretty nearly frightening her into another spell of illness.

From that time Selina had no spirit to retaliate. She took all that was put upon her—and it was a great deal—and bore it in silence and patience. She saw that her marriage, taking one thing with another, had turned out to be the mistake her friends had foretold that it would.

be. Mr. Radcliffe, growing by degrees into a state of apathy as he got older, was completely under the dominion of Stephen. He did not mean to be unkind to his wife : he just perceived nothing ; he was indifferent to all that passed around him : had they set fire to Selina's petticoats before his eyes, he'd hardly have seen the blaze. Now and again Selina would try to make friends with Holt : but Holt, though never uncivil, had a way of throwing her off. And so, she lived on a cowed, broken-spirited woman, eating away her heart in silence. Selina Radcliffe had found out that there were worse evils in the world than poverty.

She might have died then but for her boy. You never saw a nicer little fellow than he—that Francis Radcliffe. A bright, tractable, loving boy; with laughing blue eyes, and fair curls falling back from his pretty face. Mr. and Mrs. Stephen hated him. Their children, Tom and Lizzy, pinched and throttled him : but the lad took it all in good part, and had the sweetest temper imaginable. He loved his mother beyond telling, and she made him as gentle and nearly as patient as she was. Virtually driven from the parlour, except at meal times, their refuge was the Pine Room. There they were unmolested. There Selina educated and trained him, doing her best to show him the way to the next world, as well as to fit him for this.

One day when he was about nine years old, Selina was up aloft, in the little room where he slept ; which had a better view than some of the rooms had, and looked out into the open country. It was snowy weather, and she caught sight of the two boys in the yard below, snowballing each other. Opening the window to call Francis in—for he always got into the wars when with Tom, and she had learnt to dread his being with him—she saw Stephen Radcliffe crossing from the barn. Suddenly a snow-ball took Stephen in the face. It came from Tom ; she saw that ; Francis was stooping down at the time, collecting material for a fresh missive.

"Who flung that at me ?" roared out Stephen, in a rage.

Tom disclaimed all knowledge of it ; and Stephen Radcliffe seized upon Francis, beating him shamefully.

"It was not Francis," called out Selina from the window, shivering at the sight ; for Stephen in his violence might sometime, as she knew, lame the lad. "Its touching you was an accident ; I could see that ; but it was not Francis who threw it."

The cold, rarefied air carried her words distinctly to the ear of Stephen. Holding Francis by one hand to prevent his escape, he told Mrs. Radcliffe that she was a liar, adding other polite epithets and a few oaths. And then he began pummelling the lad again.

"Come in, Francis !—Let him come in !" implored the mother, clasping her hands in her bitter agony. "Oh, is there no refuge for him and for me ?"

She ran down to their sanctum, the Pine Room. Francis came up, sore all over, and his face bleeding. He was a brave little lad, and he strove to make light of it, and keep his tears down. She held him to her, and burst into sobs while trying to comfort him. That upset him at once.

"Oh, my darling, try and bear ! My poor boy, there's nothing left for us both but to bear. The world is full of wrongs and tribulation : but, Francis, it will all be made right when we get to Heaven."

"Don't cry, mamma. It didn't hurt me much. But, indeed, the snow-ball was not mine."

At ten years old the boys were sent to school. Young Tom, allowed to have his own way, grew beyond everybody's control, even his father's ; and Stephen packed him off to school. Selina besought her husband to send Francis also. Why not, replied Mr. Radcliffe ; the boy must be educated. And, in spite of Stephen's interfering opposition, Francis was despatched. It was frightfully lonely and unpleasant for Selina after that, and she got to have a pitiful look on her face.

The school was a sharp one, and Francis got on well ; he seemed to possess his grandfather Elliot's aptitude for learning. Tom hated it. After each of the half-yearly holidays, it took Stephen himself to get him to school again : and before he was fourteen he capped it all by appearing at home uncalled for, a red-hot fugitive, and announcing an intention of going to sea.

Tom carried his point. After some feats of skirmishing between him and his father, he was shipped off as "midshipman" on board a fine merchantman bound for Hong Kong. Stephen Radcliffe might never have given a consent, but for the certainty that if he did not give it, Tom would decamp from the Torr, as he did from school, and go off as a common seaman before the mast. It was strange, with his crabbed nature, how much he cared for those two children !

"You'll have that other one home now," said sullen Stephen to his father. "No good to be paying for him there."

And most likely it would have been so ; but fate, or fortune, intervened. Francis got a wind-fall. A clergyman, who had known Mr. Elliot, died, and left Francis a thousand pounds. Selina decided that it should be spent, or at least a portion of it, in completing his education in a superior manner—though, no doubt, Stephen would have liked to get hold of the money. Francis was sent up to King's College in London, and to board at the house of one of its masters. In this way a few more years passed on. Francis chose the Bar as a profession, and began to study law.

"The Bar !" sneered Stephen. "A penniless beggar like Francis Radcliffe ! Put a pig to learn to spell !"

A bleak day in winter. The wind was howling and crying round

Sandstone Torr, tearing through the branches of the nearly leafless trees, whirling the weather-cock atop of the lofty tower, playing madly on the window-panes. If there was one spot in the county that the wind seemed to favour above all other spots, it was the Torr. It would go shrieking in the air round about there like so many unquiet spirits.

In the dusk of evening, on a sofa beside the fire in the Pine Room lay Mrs. Radcliffe, with a white, worn face and hollow eyes. She was slowly dying. Until to-day she had not thought there was any immediate danger : but she knew it all now, and that the end was at hand.

So it was not that knowledge which had caused her, a day or two ago, to write to London for Francis. Some news brought in by Stephen Radcliffe had unhinged and shocked her beyond expression. Francis was leading a loose, bad life, drinking and gam'ling, and going to the deuce headlong, ran the tales : and Stephen repeated them indoors.

That same night she wrote for Francis. She could not rest day or night until she could see him face to face, and say—Is this true, or untrue? He might have reached the Torr the previous day ; but he did not. She was lying listening for him now in the twilight's gloom amid the blasts of that shrieking wind.

"If God had but taken my child in infancy!" came the chief thought of her troubled heart. "If I could but know that I should meet him on the everlasting shores!"

"Mother!"

She started up with a yearning cry. It was Francis. He had arrived, and come up stairs, and his opening of the door had been drowned by the wind. A tall, slender, bright-faced young fellow of twenty, with the same sunny hair as in his childhood, and a genial heart.

Francis halted, and stood in startled consternation. The fire-light played on her wasted face, and he saw—what was there. In manners he was still almost a boy ; his disposition open, his nature transparent.

She made room for him on the sofa ; sitting beside him, and laying her weary head for a moment on his shoulder. Francis took a few deep breaths while getting over the shock.

"How long have you been like this, mother? What has brought it about?"

"Nothing in particular ; nothing fresh," she answered. "I have been getting nearer and nearer to it for years and years."

"Is there no hope?"

"None. And oh, my darling, but for you I should be so glad to die. Sitting here in my loneliness for ever, with only Heaven to look forward to, it seems that I have learnt to see a little already of what its Rest will be."

Francis pushed his hair from his brow, and left his hand there. He had loved his mother intensely, and the blow was cruel.

Quietly, holding his other hand in hers, she spoke of what Stephen Radcliffe had heard. Francis's face turned to scarlet as he listened. But in that solemn hour he could not and would not tell a lie.

"Yes, it was true; partly true, he said. He was not always so steady as he ought to be. Some of his acquaintances, young men studying law like himself, or medicine, or what not, were rather wild, and he had been the same. Drink?—well, yes; at times they did take more than might be quite needful. But they were not given to gamble: that was false."

"Francis," she said, her heart beating wildly with its pain, "the worst of all is the drink. If once you suffer yourself to acquire a love for it, you may never leave it off. It is so insidious —"

"But I don't love it, mother; I don't care for it—and I am sure you must know that I would tell you nothing but truth now," he interrupted. "I have only done as the others do. I'll leave it off."

"Will you promise me that?"

"Yes, I will. I do promise it."

She carried his hand to her lips and kissed it. Francis had always kept his promises.

"It is so difficult for young fellows without a home to keep straight in London," he acknowledged. "There's no good influence over us; there's no pleasant family circle where we can spend our evenings: and we go out, and get drawn into this and that. It all comes of thoughtlessness, mother."

"You have promised me, Francis."

"Oh yes. And I will perform."

"How long will it be before you are called to the Bar?" she asked, after a pause.

"Two years."

"So much as that!"

"I think so.—How the wind howls!"

Mrs. Radcliffe sighed, Francis's future seemed not to be very clear. Unless he could get on pretty quickly, and make a living for himself—

"When I am gone, Francis," she said aloud, interrupting her own thoughts, "this will not be any home for you."

"It has not been one for me for some years now, mother."

"But if you do not get into work soon, and your own funds come to an end, you will have no home but this to turn to."

"If I attempted to turn to it, Stephen would soon make it too hot for me, I expect."

"That might not be all; not the worst," she quickly answered, dropping her voice to a tone of fear, and glancing around like one in a fever.

Francis looked round too. He supposed she was seeking something.

"It is always scaring me, Francis," she whispered. "There are times when I fancy I am going to see it enacted before my eyes. It puts me into a state of nervous dread indescribable."

"See what enacted?" he asked.

"I was sitting here about ten days ago, Francis, thinking of you, thinking of the future, when all at once a most startling prevision—yes, I call it so—a prevision came upon me of some dreadful ill in store for you; ill wrought by Stephen. I—I am not sure but it was—that—that he took your life," she added, scarcely above her breath, and in a tone that made Francis shiver.

"Why, what do you mean, mother?"

"Every day, every day since, every night and nearly all night, that strange conviction has lain upon me. I know it will be fulfilled: when the hand of death is closing on us, these previsions are an instinct. As surely as that I am now disclosing this to you, Francis, so surely will you fall in some way under the iron hand of Stephen."

"Perhaps you were dreaming, mother dear," suggested Francis for he had his share of common sense.

"It will be in this house; the Torr," she went on, paying no attention to him; "for it is always these rooms and the dreary trees outside that seem to lie before me. For that reason, I would not have you live here —"

"But don't you think you may have been dreaming?" repeated Francis, interrupting the rest.

"I was as wide awake as I am now, Francis, but I was deep in thought. It stole upon me, this impression, without any kind of warning, or any train of ideas that could have led to it; and it lies within me, a sure and settled conviction. *Beware of Stephen.* But oh, Francis! even while I give you this caution, I know that you will not escape the evil—whatever it may turn out to be."

"I hope I shall," he said, rather lightly. "I'll try, at any rate."

"Well, I have warned you, Francis. Be always upon your guard. And keep away from the Torr, if you can."

Holt, quite an aged woman now, came in with some tea for her mistress. Francis took the opportunity to go down and see his father. Mr. Radcliffe, in a shabby old coat, was sitting in his arm-chair at the parlour fire. He looked pleased to see Francis, and kept his hand for a minute after he had shaken it.

"My mother is very ill, sir," said Francis.

"Ay," replied the old man, dreamily. "Been so for some time now."

"Can nothing be done to—to—keep her with us a little longer, father?"

"I suppose not. Ask Duffham."

"What the devil!—is it you! What brings *you* here?"

The coarse salutation came from Stephen. Francis turned to see him enter and bang the door after him. His shoes were dirty, his beaver gaiters splashed, and his hair was like a tangled mop.

"I came down to see my father and mother," answered Francis, as he held out his hand. But Stephen did not choose to see it.

Mrs. Stephen, in a straight-down blue cloth gown and black cap garnished with red flowers, looking more angular and hard than of yore, came in with the tea-tray. She did as much work in the house as a servant. Lizzy had been married the year before, and lived in Birmingham with her husband, who was curate at one of the churches there.

"You'll have to sleep on the sofa to-night, young man," was Mrs. Stephen's snappish salutation to Francis. "There's not a bed in the house that's aired."

"The sofa will do," he answered.

"Let his bed be aired to-morrow, Becca," interposed the old man. And they stared in astonishment to hear him say it.

Francis sat down to the tea-table with Stephen and his wife; but neither of them spoke a word to him. Mr. Radcliffe had his tea in his arm-chair at the fire, as usual. Afterwards, Francis took his hat and went out. He was going to question the doctor: and the wind came rushing and howling about him as he bore onwards down the lane towards Church Dykely.

In about an hour's time he came back again with red eyes. He said it was the wind, but his subdued voice sounded as though he had been crying. His father, with bent head, was smoking a long pipe; Stephen sat at the table, reading the sensational police reports in a low weekly newspaper.

"Been out for a stroll, lad?" asked old Radcliffe—and it was the first voluntary question he had put for months. Stephen, listening, could not think what was coming to him.

"I have been to Duffham's," answered Francis. "He—he—" with a stopping of the breath, "says that nothing can be done for my mother; that a few days now will see the end of it."

"Ay," quietly responded the old man. "Our turns must all come."

"Her turn ought not to have come yet," said Francis, nearly breaking down.

"No?"

"I have been looking forward at odd moments to a time when I should be in work, and able to give her a happy home with me, father. It is very hard to come here and find *this*."

Old Radcliffe took a long whiff; and, opening his mouth, let the smoke curl aloft. "Have a pipe, Francis?"

"No, thank you, sir. I am going up to my mother."

As he left the room, Stephen, having finished the police reports, was

turning the paper to see what it said about the markets, when his father put down his pipe and began to speak.

"Only a few days, he says, Ste!"

"What?" demanded Stephen in his surly and ungracious tones.

"She's been ailing always; and has sat up there away from us, Ste. But we shall miss her."

"Miss her!" retorted Ste, leaving the paper, and walking to the fire. "Why, what good has she been of? *Miss* her? The house'll have a good riddance of her," he added, under his breath.

"It'll be my turn next, Ste. And not long first, either."

Stephen took a keen look at his father from beneath his over-hanging, bushy eyebrows, that were beginning to turn grey: All this sounded very odd.

"When you and me and Becca's left alone here by ourselves, we shall be as easy as can be," he said.

"What month is it, Ste?"

"November."

"Ay. You'll have seen the last o' me before Christmas."

"Think so?" was Stephen's equable remark. The old man nodded; and there came a pause.

"And you and Becca'll be glad to get us out, Ste."

Stephen did not take the trouble to gainsay it. He was turning about in his thoughts something that he had a mind to speak of.

"They've been nothing but interlopers from the first—she and him. I expect you to do what's right by me, father."

"Ay, I shall do what's right," answered the old man.

"About the money, I mean. It must *all* come to me, father. I was heir to it before you ever set eyes on her; and her brat must not be let stand in my way. Do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear. It'll be all right, Ste."

"Take only a fraction from the income, and how would the Torr be kept up?" pursued Stephen, plucking up his spirits at the last answer.

"He has got his fine profession, and he can make a living for himself out on't: some o' them councillors make their thousands a year. But he must not be let rob *me*."

"He shan't rob you, Ste. It will be all right."

And covetous Stephen, thus reassured and put at ease, strolled into the kitchen, and ordered Becca to provide his favourite dish, toasted cheese, for supper.

The "few days" spoken of by Mr. Duffham, were slowly passing. There was not much difference to be observed in Selina; except that her voice went sinking down like a spent sky-rocket. She could only use it at intervals. But her face got a beautiful look of radiant peace upon it, just as though she were three parts in Heaven. I have heard Duffham say so many a time since; I, Johnny Ludlow.

On the fifth day she was so much better that it seemed little short of a miracle. They found her in the Pine Room early, up and dressed: when Holt went in to light the fire, she was looking over the two books that lay on the round table. One of them was the Bible; the other was a translation of the German tale "Sintram," which Francis had brought her when he came down the last summer. The story had taken hold of her imagination, and she nearly knew it by heart.

Down stairs went Holt, and told them that the mistress (for, contradictory though it may seem, Selina had been always accorded that title) had taken a "new lease of life," and was getting well. Becca, astonished, went stalking up: perhaps she was afraid it might be true. Selina had "Sintram" in her hand as she sat: her eyes looked bright, her cheeks pink, her voice was improved.

"Oh," said Becca. "What have you left your bed for at this early hour?"

"I feel so well," Selina answered with a smile, letting the book lie open on the table. "Won't you shake hands with me?—and—and kiss me?"

Now Becca had never kissed her in all the years they had lived together, and she did not seem to care about beginning now. "I'll go down and beat you up an egg and a spoonful of wine," said she, just touching the tips of Selina's fingers, in response to the held-out hand: and, with that, got away.

Stephen was the only one who did not pay the Pine Room a visit that day. He heard of the surprising change while he was feeding the pigs: for Becca went out and told him. Stephen splashed some wash over the side of the trough, and gave a little pig a smack with the bucket, and that was all his answer. Old Radcliffe sat; an hour in the room; but he never spoke all the while: so his company could not be considered as much.

Selina crept as far as the window, and looked out on the bare pines and the other dreary trees. Most trees are dreary in November. Francis saw a shiver take her as she stood, leaning on the window frame; and he went to give her his arm and bring her back again. They were by themselves then.

"A week, or so, of this improvement, mother, and you will be as you used to be," said he cheerfully, seating her on the sofa and stirring up the fire. "We shall have our home together yet."

She turned her face full on his, as he sat down by her; a half-questioning, half-wondering look in her eyes.

"Not in this world, Francis. Surely *you* are not deceived!" and his over-sanguine heart went down like lead.

"It is but the flickering-up of the spirit before it finally quits the weary frame; just as you may have seen the flame shoot up from an expiring candle," she continued. "The end is very near now."

A spasm of pain rose in his throat. She took his hands between her own feeble ones.

"Don't grieve, Francis ; don't grieve for me ! Remember what my life has been."

He did remember it. He remembered also the answer Duffham gave when he had inquired what malady it was his mother was dying of. "A broken heart."

"Don't forget, Francis—never forget—that it is a journey we must enter on, sooner or later."

"An uncertain and unknown journey at the best !" he said. "You have no fear of it ?"

"Fear ! No, but I had once."

She spoke the words in a low, sweet tone, and pointed with a smile to the book that still lay open on the table. Francis's eyes fell on the page.

"When death is drawing near,
And thy heart shrinks with fear,
And thy limbs fail,
Then raise thy hands and pray
To Him who cheers the way
Through the dark vale.

"Seest thou the eastern dawn ?
Hears't thou, in the red morn,
The angel's song ?
Oh ! lift thy drooping head,
Thou who in gloom and dread
Hast lain so long.

"Death comes to set thee free ;
Oh ! meet him cheerily,
As thy true friend ;
And all thy fears shall cease,
And in eternal peace
Thy penance end."

Francis sat very still, struggling a little with that lump in his throat. She leaned forward, and let her head rest upon him, just as she had done the other day when he first came in. His emotion broke loose then.

"Oh, mother, what shall I do without you ?"

"You will have God," she whispered.

Still all the morning she kept up well ; talking of this, talking of that, saying how much of late the verses, just quoted, had floated in her mind and become a reality to her ; showing Holt a slit that had appeared in the table-cover and needed darning telling Francis his pocket-handkerchiefs looked yellow and should be bleached. It might have been thought she was only going out to tea at Church Dykely, instead of entering on the other journey she had told of.

"Have you been giving her anything?" demanded Stephen, casting his surly eyes on Francis as they sat opposite to each other at dinner in the parlour. "Dying people can't spurt up in this manner without drugs to make 'em spurt."

Francis did not deign to answer. Stephen projected his fork, and took a potato out of the dish. Frank went upstairs when the meal was over. He had left his mother sitting on the sofa, comparatively well. He found her lying on the bed in the next room, grappling with death. She lifted her feeble arms to welcome him, and a ray of joyous light shone on her face. Francis made hardly one step of it to the bed.

"Oh, my darling, it will be all right!" she breathed. "I have prayed for you, and I know—I know I have been heard. You will be helped to put away that evil habit; temptation may assail, but it will not finally overcome you. And, Francis, when—" Her voice failed.

"I no longer hear what you say, mother," cried Francis in an agony.

"Yes, yes," she repeated, as if in answer to something he had said. "Beware of Stephen."

The hands and face alike fell. Francis rang the bell violently, and Holt came up. All was over.

Stephen attended the funeral with the others. Grumbling wofully at having to do it, because it involved a new suit of black clothes. "They'll be ready for the old man, though," was his consoling reflection: "he won't be long."

He was even quicker than Stephen thought. On the very day week that they had come in from leaving Selina in the grave, Mr. Radcliffe was lying as lifeless as she was. A seizure carried him off. Francis was summoned again from London before he had well got back to it. Stephen could not, at such a season, completely ignore him.

He did not foresee the blow that was to come thundering down. When Mr. Radcliffe's will came to be opened, it was found that his property was equally divided between the two sons, half and half: Stephen of course inheriting the Torr; and Squire Todhetley being appointed trustee for Francis. "And I earnestly beg of him to accept the trust," ran the words, "for the sake of Selina's son."

Francis caught the glare of Stephen as they were read out. It was of course Stephen himself, but it looked more like a savage pole-cat. That warning of his mother's came into Francis's mind with a rush.

And you will hear more next month. A happy New Year to you all.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

A NIGHT IN A MONASTERY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A MONTH AT GASTEIN."

STARTING from Charing Cross, we reached Dover at the appointed time. The sea was perfectly calm ; not a ripple on the water, which had a hazy, dreamy, hot, contented, liquid look upon its surface : a look suggestive of summer, and sunshine, and bright blue skies, and happiness. Yet it was not a summer month ; only summer weather : for it was Tuesday, the first of April, 1873, and the trees all down the line had scarcely put off their wintry aspect. The passage across was delightful ; the journey between Calais and Paris, as usual, tedious, but accomplished at last.

I had been in Paris at the commencement of the war, but not since the siege and commune. Most people who had had that pleasure said it was very different from the Paris of old : a scene of ruins : of desolation ; of heartbroken people, and melancholy faces, and sad tones. I saw nothing of this. Ruins there were ; some of them sad enough, but there was little beyond to tell of what Paris had gone through. The people—old friends and acquaintances—and new ones—were as lively as of old ; as gay and lighthearted ; just as merry. The theatres each night were crowded to suffocation. As much laughter was going on in them, as much applauding : as many witty sallies and gay dresses adorned the foyers, as in the prosperous days of the Empire.

The trees in the Tuileries gardens, as seen from the windows of Meurice's Hotel, looked as bright and beautiful as in the days gone by. They were just bursting into leaf, and between the cracks and chinks you could catch the dancing sunlight, the small twigs and branches intersecting each other like veins in marble. In the afternoons the gardens were alive with mothers, and children, and nurses, all rejoicing in the hot, fair weather, the light atmosphere, the glowing skies. Nothing could more perfectly have resembled old Paris. Not a sign of gloom, or misery, or death, or poverty, or decay.

Yet the death and suffering of the siege and commune were not exaggerated. One old friend, a native of Paris, living in the Avenue d'Antin, a rich old man of seventy-seven, told me about it. He was at home during the siege.

"I could not get away from Paris," said he. "I was starving nearly all the time ; I had very little but black bread to live upon : and that to a man of my age, who had never known privations of any sort, was no slight calamity. I did not dare go out of doors, or put my head out of window for fear of the shells. One morning, more venturesome than usual, I know not why, I hazarded a short stroll towards the Barrière de l'Etoile. Crack ! a shell came over on to the roof of a

house, exploded, carrying with it roofs and chimney pots, smashing windows, and shaking the very ground itself. You need not ask whether I was terrified : my teeth chattered. I am an old man now, and I have been young once ; but though in those by-gone days I may have made more speed, certainly I never hurried more. As fast as my old legs would take me, I returned to the shelter of my own roof, and left it no more until the siege was over."

"And the commune ?" I inquired. "How did you support that ? There were dangers also to encounter ?"

"Yes," he answered. "Some of them greater than those of the siege, for in it lay still greater madness and wickedness. It is awful to contemplate how quickly the French turn themselves into wild beasts."

"And the women were worse than the men ?"

"The women !" he cried. "Do not speak of them. Women were made to be angels, but when they become bad they are worse than demons. They hesitate at nothing."

"You, however, happily escaped them ?" I asked.

"I was away," he answered. "As soon as ever the siege was over I left Paris. Not without difficulty and danger ; but still I got away. I was thoroughly ill from the miseries and privations I had endured, and felt that nothing but change of air would restore me. So I went."

"Well ?" I said, as he paused.

"I am telling you," he answered, somewhat fretfully at the interruption. "I went to St. Germain. The air there is pure, you know, and I thought I should succeed in getting a couple of comfortable rooms. Not at all. Every room in the place was occupied by people who had left Paris. For several days I had to sleep in a stable—fancy being reduced to that ! At last I managed to get a room in a cabaret : a horrible little estaminet ; so dirty, so poor, with so bad a reputation that no one would venture into it. Be it what it may, I thought, it cannot be worse than a stable. So I took the room, and lived there, miserably, for a whole month. Before the end of that time the Commune had had its life and death."

"And you were none the worse for it ?"

"Not much. Once or twice reports reached me that the houses I possess in this neighbourhood had been destroyed by these savages ; but when I returned to Paris I found that whilst many other proprietors had suffered, the Commune had spared me."

"You came back all the better for your change ?"

"Yes ; in spite of the privations and anxieties I had gone through ; the miseries of that horrible cabaret. I suppose they did their best for me ; and then there was the pure air and the change. Since then, I have been living quietly, and now I am as well as ever I was."

"I felt doubtful whether I should find you alive or dead," I remarked to another old friend, of whom I had not had tidings since the siege.

"Little wonder," was the reply. "I was more likely to be dead than living, perhaps. But, as it happened, I was out of Paris during the whole of the siege. I was quite in the south of France, and could not manage to get back in time. I should not have grieved at that, but my wife was here, and I knew not what would become of her. Part of the time—just imagine!—she had to take refuge with others in the cellars of our railway stations ; and whilst crouching up in the corners, they could hear the cries of the wounded and dying in the streets."

It can scarcely be wondered at that the most inveterate hatred against the Prussians filled their hearts. I entered a shop one morning for one of the Tauchnitz books : a Librairie where I had many a time bought them in the past."

"A Tauchnitz book!" cried the master—who was rarely present—aghast and glaring. "I have not one. I have swept every sign of them away as I would sweep away the plague."

"But why?" I asked, in doubt.

"Because they are German," he muttered in an undertone, something like distant thunder. "Because I hate everything German. Because everything German ought to go to the bad. I pant for the day when we shall return with interest the debt we owe that people."

And he did pant. His heart seemed to swell, his eyes to blaze almost with insane fire. Yet he was a highly educated, calm-judging man : a bookseller only for the time being, and sub rosâ ; in reality a partner in one of the most important publishing houses in the world.

In the old days, amongst a certain class, but a very large one : that class who are restless, never contented with what is, be it ever so good : the sore point was the Empire ; the object of hatred the Emperor. Now they leave him in peace ; not a few even regret him, though secretly ; and could he but rise from his grave, make war against the Germans and return a conqueror, the whole population would exalt him into a saint, and for a time give him the chief place in their hearts.

Last April the Republic was new ; the President had used his power wisely ; and it was popular. Upon every public building was written, in large, defiant capitals, "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité." The empire, as far as possible, had been sponged out ; the statues and busts of the Napoleons had been rudely hurled from their pedestals and swept away. "The Republic is our last chance," was the cry. "If the Empire is restored, no matter who reigns, France will be lost for ever."

Amongst the saddest of the ruins was the Hôtel de Ville, which can never be restored in all its beauty. During the day-time it was just then a scene of great excitement, if not of gaiety. The conscription was taking place. Hundreds—thousands—of young men were going in and out of the little wooden gate of the temporary palisades to their fate. To those who longed and prayed for exemption from serving in the army, the passing through must have been a terrible ordeal : the

interval between waiting and drawing far worse than the mauvais quart d'heure of proverbial quotation. A perpetual and vast crowd was collected outside ; and as each young fellow came forth from the fiery trial, he was, if happy enough to have drawn a high number, seized upon by kinsmen and acquaintances, and kissed and hugged in an absurdly excited manner. If the contrary, and the unlucky youth came back with a low number, a party of equally luckless young men would seize upon him ; and linking arms, five or six in a row, their numbers stuck conspicuously in their caps, they would patrol the streets in a desperate mood, singing and assuming jollity : or, hiring a fiacre, would drive about in a reckless way not pleasant to see : bribing the coachman with an extra pour-boire to rattle them over the stones as if the very demon of destruction was in pursuit.

Whether Empire or Republic sways the rod of power, still they must have the conscription ; and laws, and judgments, and condemnations, and taxes : and no more freedom in the latter state than in the former, notwithstanding their oft-repeated motto. There is no real liberty ; the equality is that every man is trying to do the best for himself ; the fraternity measures itself by the same standard ; and when they get to realize this, they grow tired and dissatisfied with a Republic, and again it yields to a King or Emperor. It has always been so ; with a people so constituted it always will be.

I had friends living down towards the south, in Grenoble, and suddenly the idea crossed me to go and see them. I would walk in upon them unexpectedly and take them by storm. To accomplish this I started one night at eight o'clock, by the Marseilles express, from the Gare de Lyon. The night journey was dark, but I was familiar with the surrounding country, which even in daylight possesses but little beauty to attract the traveller. The first part lies through the valleys of the Seine, Yonne, Armonçon, Brenne, and Oze. The word valley is apt, in spite of many contrary experiences, to conjure up to the mind a picture of beauty : slopes, and green pastures ; rivulets whose rippling sounds form the most fitting accompaniment to the songs of the birds ; the abode of all that is soft and lovely and lovable in nature. Here you get little of this. The outlook is monotonous for mile after mile. And knowing this I preferred taking the night express, the fastest train on the line.

The night looked gloomy enough as we went forth into the dark. About half-past one we reached Dijon, and here I got down with the rest of the travellers who were not sunk in sloth or slumber, and looked about me a moment before entering the buffet.

I wanted this moment to reconnoitre and think. I had last been at the station three years ago at the commencement of the unhappy war, and what a different scene it had then presented. Now, calm, and dark, and closed. Then, every room, every hole and corner open,

flaring away with gas. The waiting-rooms crowded with troops, lying and thrown about in all directions : Zouaves and Turcos who did not resemble human beings : who very likely fought like wild beasts, which they did resemble : many of them lying about drunk or asleep, in every attitude of abandonment. A picture so vivid that it is hardly possible to recall it without a shiver.

I stood so long on the platform, drawing comparisons between that past time and the present, that I scarcely left myself a moment for a bowl of coffee. Scarcely was it poured out, hot and steaming, when the bell rang and the passengers frantically rushed away. After swallowing the coffee and paying for it, the train doors were closed, and the engine was preparing to start. To my infinite vexation, I could not find my own compartment, of which I had omitted to take the number, and where in a comfortable corner I had left rugs and books. I went up and down, looking in here and peering in there, feeling very hurried and unsettled. But it was hopeless. The carriage was not to be found. The guards were raging and storming. At last, despairing, I opened a door, and was thrust back with an intimation in broad English tones—"No room." It must have been a mistake, to speak politely, on the part of those travellers, for there were but four of them. But there was no time to argue the point. On, to the next compartment. The curtains had been carefully closed, the red shield drawn over the lamp. I was met with a howl of consternation—a quartette of horror—and the words "Pour dames seules!"

Four ladies, of uncertain age, reclined in the four corners. One of them, having disengaged herself of a front of flaxen curls, and a set of teeth, which were gingerly placed beside her, had enveloped her head in a nightcap with broad frills. No sooner did she catch sight of one of the opposite sex (perfidious monsters!), invading the sanctum, than she gave vent to one of the most piercing shrieks ever uttered, and bobbed her head under a shawl. Although the train was in motion, they would not let me in. The guard, with an amused laugh, broad enough to have driven a vain woman insane, pulled me back, opened the door of the next compartment, and launched me in like an arrow. Room there, and to spare, but of comfort little. The night was chilly ; my rug was probably appropriated by somebody else, and turned into a blanket ; so I had to sit shivering. We made progress, and at half-past seven reached Lyons. I secured my property, and left the Marseilles express for the line branching off to Grenoble.

The change, in the matter of speed, was not for the better. There were numerous stations on the line, and we halted at each : at some of them loitering away as much as ten minutes, where perhaps one passenger would get in and one alight. So much unnecessary time is allowed these trains that, in spite of all the slow speed and loitering, they still travel too quickly for the time-tables.

The journey was monotonous, the scenery tame, until we drew towards Grenoble, when it changed its aspect, and we entered the valley of the Isère, one of the most beautiful and fertile in France : luxuriant and abundant in vegetation. Here, it is surrounded by the Alps, many of which are cultivated and tilled far up the heights, yielding a rich produce. The crops for the most part are corn, clover, and hemp : the latter, for which the valley is celebrated, growing to a great height. The luxuriant beauty of the valley is only apparent when vegetation is advanced ; when the fruit trees are in blossom ; when the wind sweeps lightly over the waving ears of corn ; when the vines are laden with their rich, graceful bunches. Each successive month and season brings its own peculiar harvest to perfection. The vines here are, for the most part, hung from tree to tree, in festoons, and are trained over wooden trellis-work ; a more picturesque mode of cultivation than running them up poles, as in the vineyards of the Rhine, and after the manner of our English hop-gardens. But even this is still infinitely inferior in effect to the vineyards of Southern Tyrol and Italy.

It was only when very close upon Grenoble that the old town unfolded itself. A great precipitous mountain buttress stood forth most provokingly in the way. But at last, at half-past eleven, the train steamed noisily and languidly into the station. I found myself by no means sorry to part company with so much irritating inactivity.

"Now for it!" thought I. Surprises are the lot of man, and my friends who, when they thought of me at all, thought me safe in England (I had not even sent them word that I was in Paris), would be somewhat astonished this morning. It was midday, and they were seated at *déjeuner* when I rang the bell. Quietly putting aside the astonished waiting-maid who answered the summons, and who afterwards confided to her mistress that for doing so she had at first thought me "le plus joliment malhonnête monsieur qu'elle avait jamais de la vie vue," I opened the door of the *salle-à-manger* and walked in.

Ghosts do not move with a clatter; neither, as a rule, do they appear in travelling gear, with begrimed faces and disordered locks : but as I stood there for a moment, motionless, taking in the scene and barbarously enjoying their consternation, I know that in the first instance, without stopping to reason, or weigh probabilities, they did both insanely and wildly believe that they beheld a spectre.

"Mon frère!" (This exclamation should by rights be printed in largest capitals. Nothing less could give any idea of the tone or look by which it was accompanied. And this would do it but faintly.)

At the same time H. dropped his knife and fork, sprang up, and turned pale as whitewash ; his jaw, I thought, was about to fall, his eyes to close ; and I, alarmed, felt half inclined to send the gaping waiting-maid for a doctor, when H. came to. Hands were clasped ; hearts beat with pleasurable emotion ; his pretty wife came round and

actually kissed me in spite of the dust and dirt of a sixteen hours' journey. I was made le bien-venu.

"I could not make it out," H. kept repeating every few moments, in a vague, abstracted, soliloquizing manner, not saying much for the balance of his mind. "Could not make it out. Thought some of you at home must be ill."

And I believe he did not quite make it out all the time I remained : for he persisted during the whole of that visit in producing from his capacious cellar, Chambertin at a guinea a bottle : in spite of all the powerful but hypocritical arguments I felt it my duty to advance against so mad and ruinous a proceeding.

Gradually we settled down ; and, hungry as a hunter, I fell-to with a good will upon the savoury things before me, Chambertin included. But it was hard work to satisfy my own hunger and at the same time their thirst for home news. All went well, nevertheless, until a small voice from a distant chamber smote upon our ears.

"*Ventre affamé n'a point d'oreilles,*" says a French proverb. That proverb is a delusion.

"Ah ha!" said M., her eyes lighting up with the glow of maternal pride. "Mademoiselle is awaking."

In a moment or two a small vision of beauty trotted into the room, her cheeks flushed with sleep ; opened great big hazel eyes at the ruffianly looking stranger, and ran to mamma for protection. But ere long she made firm friends : and when a ball, and a doll, and a beautiful white curly dog with a long tail, that barked, and showed his red rag of a tongue, and went upon wheels, had made successive inroads upon her tender heart and lively fancy, she went clean over to the enemy ; ready and willing at a moment's notice to desert home, and mamma and papa, and come over to England with the said ruffian.

"See how delicate and thin she is," said M. in a pitiable voice. "For months and months we despaired of her life ; day and night, night and day, we were in attendance upon her : and now she has to be fed thrice daily upon raw meat."

I fancy a half-stifled sigh rushed up the chimney away into the clouds at sight of the cherub. So time rolls on, thought I, somewhat sentimentally, bringing its chances and changes. Yesterday, boys and girls at home ; life a long unbroken chain of happiness, though we knew not then *how* happy. To-day, men and women : scattered, married and given in marriage : olive branches springing up around : the old home left, the old nest by some deserted. And, oh, sirs ! never again in after life can any nest be quite the same ; any notes be quite so sweet as the mother's gentle tones ; any eyes be quite so true ; any influence be so abiding. Passion springs up in the heart of man, and love for woman, which is strong and pure and sweet too, or ought to be ; which, too, has its influence in after life for weal or woe. But far

away down in the heart there is a memory that never dies ; a love that never grows old ; a face and a tone that, whether present or absent, linger for ever and ever in the soul.

In this after life there may be blessings innumerable ; a Benjamin's share of happiness : but where are the old hopes and dreams ? where the bright couleur de rose that in those former times enveloped the distant life and the future ? The trees are green ; they bud and blossom ; the sky is blue ; the sun shines, we have spring and autumn ; summer and winter : nothing outwardly seems changed. But the rose-glow has fled for ever.

The next day, Sunday, was spent quietly, as it is just and fitting Sunday should be spent. It was arranged that on the following day, Monday, H. and I should together visit the Monastery of the Grande Chartreuse; distant some thirty miles from Grenoble ; embedded far away up amongst the pine forests of the Alps ; a place I had long desired to see.

There were various ways of reaching the Grande Chartreuse, and we finally decided that, all things considered, our wisest plan would be to take the omnibus as far as St. Laurent du Pont, a small village about ten miles from the monastery, lying at the foot of the long, narrow gorge or defile leading up to it.

The omnibus started at half-past six, and on Monday morning soon after five we were on the alert.

"I wish I was going with you," said M., who was occupied with household cares for our benefit ; seeing that hot coffee was being prepared and a bountiful table spread. "What a shame of those terrible old monks not to admit ladies within their walls ! How barbarous and unrefined they must grow ! Come, C., it's six o'clock. Take your coffee and some of this delicious pâté de foie gras."

"Could we not dress you up as a man and smuggle you in ?" I suggested, obeying her commands. "You are not tall, and might pass very well for a boy."

"And my hair !" cried M., with quite a diminutive shriek of vanity. "Cut it off for a pack of uncivilized monks ? Le jeu ne vaudrait pas la chandelle."

So H. and I started for the omnibus, which we found on the very point of departure. "How glorious !" I exclaimed. "Not a passenger inside. We have it all to ourselves."

It was a short-lived glory. By-and-by there got in a man who had evidently been making his breakfast on a dish of garlic, the popular luxury of the pays there. H., whose olfactory nerves had become of necessity somewhat less sensitive to the prevalence of this agreeable perfume, though he found it bad enough that morning, grinned as the man entered. "Now you're in for it," said he. "I will do violence to my inclinations, and for your sake light up." This generous self-

sacrifice (which ended in smoke) was of some service ; but it was impossible completely to extinguish the fumes of garlic even by the fumes of tobacco, until the departure of the man himself. This took place in about three-quarters of an hour, and the "bon voyage" we dismissed him with was at any rate a hearty one.

From the first the morning had not been fine, but it became much worse as the day progressed. Much of the interest of the road and scenery was destroyed by the rain, which began steadily to come down. By degrees the clouds thickened and darkened, and wrapped themselves round the tops of the mountains, and rolled down into the valleys with most depressing and gloomy persistency. Yet in spite of this the drive could not be otherwise than pleasant and picturesque. The horses trotted at a good round pace, jingling their collar-bells : a perpetual sound that would be insupportable in the streets of London, but seeming almost musical and well-placed amidst the mountains : bringing to mind that scene in *Dalilah* so famously acted and put upon the stage of the Théâtre Français in Paris.

(In the distance you hear this sound of bells: a car is rapidly journeying through the mountains. Two men are visible on the stage. One has deceived a pure-minded girl who loved him, and whom he loved : jilted her for a worthless woman, who in turn leaves him for another. His first love dies of a broken heart, and he repents too late. The car contains her body, which her father is conveying back to their own country. The man who has done this harm sees the car in the distance, does not recognize the inmate, and, mistaking it for some one else, shouts. The bells cease, the car stops, the old, white-haired man climbs up a steep embankment to the foot of a large wayside cross. "Que voulez-vous, messieurs," says he in a heartbroken voice, unable to recognize them in the gloom. "Que voulez-vous de moi ? Ma fille est morte. Oui, messieurs, elle est morte!"—a whole world of misery in his tones. "Je ramène son pauvre corps près de sa mère." They recognize the voice: guess the truth. The friend makes some excuse and bids him depart. The old man pleases them and disappears behind the mountain. The bells are again heard, faint and fainter, as the car proceeds onwards with its melancholy burden. The lover, who has long been at death's door, unable to bear this last shock, expires, faithful in death to his first love, his arms extended towards her remains. The whole scene, acted as it could be acted nowhere else, is full of excitement.)

On first leaving Grenoble the road was tolerably straight and smooth. The mountains to the right were close upon us; those to the left farther off, and the valley, had the weather been fine, gave promise of much beauty. Here and there upon the heights stood out an unpretending modern château, or the ruins of an old castle, grey-stained with time. Now a patriarchal couple, looking at least a hundred-and-

twenty years old, shrivelled and bowed, the woman wearing an enormous straw-bonnet of the pays peculiar to its people ; tramping their difficult way from one village to another. Now a small waggon drawn by oxen yoked together in a curious, but not very picturesque, fashion. Oxen here are very generally employed, and in light waggons and carts, for the most part, take the place of horses. Heavy, sleepy-eyed animals, but no doubt strong to labour. Now a village itself is passed, poor looking and dirty ; the children—I suppose children are

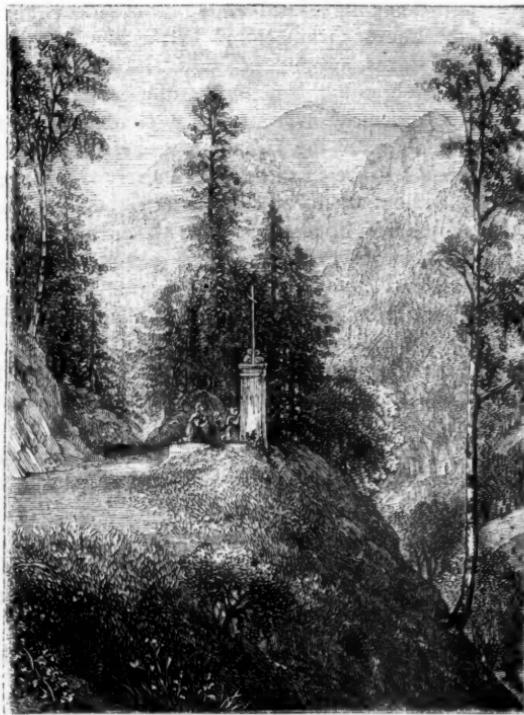


ON THE ROAD TO THE MONASTERY.—I.

the same all the world over—grubbing in the mud, making dirt pies, and rolling over door-sills ; a few of them fighting and howling like little demons : for a moment arresting their interesting little games to look after the clattering omnibus, with open mouths, and begrimed faces, and shock heads. In places bold mountain crags stood out bare, barren, and rocky. In many parts the pines grew thick and dense ; and, again, in spots the sides up to a certain height were cultivated with the luxuriance almost of a garden of the real south.

Journeying onwards, the road began to ascend, and the rain, to make

things even, came down more fiercely. Still ascending, flakes of snow mingled themselves with the rain-drops. The wind rushed down with no slight or kindly hand between the mountain pass, and crept in through our windows and underneath collars and great coats. What unpleasant and provoking weather it was ! The ascent continued for some miles, in parts exceedingly steep, and before we reached the top the rain had entirely given place to snow, which, in huge flakes, fell thick and fast. It was wonderful how the horses struggled upwards,



CROIX VERTE. ON THE WAY TO THE MONASTERY.—II.

battling with the ascent and the elements and the heavy, slushy road : never so much as pausing to take breath, though thin and dilapidated looking. But perseverance brings even up-hill work to an end ; the ascent was over at last ; then some rapid descending, in which the snow again gave place to torrents of rain ; a spell of level road, and we awoke the echoes of St. Laurent du Pont.

Here we were under the necessity of exchanging the omnibus for some other vehicle. It might be anything ; from a cart to a barouche. How we bemoaned the weather, and our untoward fate in having

pitched upon this miserable day for the expedition. It had certainly been cloudy even at the commencement; but H., who affects weather-wisdom, felt convinced, from certain signs he took much trouble to point out to me, and which I vainly strained eyesight to discover, that the morning would turn out splendidly. We started, with the result seen.

At St. Laurent du Pont we entered the café, whilst the omnibus-driver went in search of a vehicle to take us up to the monastery. It was his business to do this, not ours; the omnibus-office in Grenoble undertakes to convey you to the Grande Chartreuse, and to furnish the necessary means of doing so. In about twenty minutes, while indulging in some of the liqueur manufactured by the monks, there was a rattling heard over stones, a sound of hoofs, and our carriage, with quite a fashionable dash and uproar, stood at the door.

Of all the wretched vehicles ever drawn by pitiable cattle this was the worst. Something after the fashion of a French cabriolet. It went upon two wheels to begin with: and, in respect of comfort, it may be admitted without argument, that, under certain conditions, two wheels for two people may be made to serve all the purposes of four. But the conditions were absent. No springs; a back seat, under cover of a hood, for messieurs les voyageurs; a front seat, beyond the shelter of the hood, for the coachman; the back seat stuffed, the stuffing wet; the front seat a board, the board soaked. We had no rug with us, an insane omission; and they found a substitute that must have reposed on the rooftop of the coach-house all the previous night. Behind us, in the back of the machine, was a window, about nine inches square, "Seems draughty," said H., when we had journeyed a few yards, shrugging his shoulders, and turning up his coat collar with a shiver. I thought so too, and, turning, touched the window. Nothing but empty space and air. It was a hole; the window was broken, and had been carefully removed, affording a perfect system of ventilation. "Lively," said H. "Shan't forget this in a hurry; especially if a fellow gets laid up with a six weeks' spell of rheumatism."

But for quite the first half of the journey no snow fell, and that was something. It was a time to be thankful for small mercies.

We had reached St. Laurent du Pont about ten o'clock, and by half-past ten were again en route. Turning to the right we immediately entered the gorge leading to the monastery, and for nearly two hours were continually ascending a steep mountain pass.

The pass is one of great interest. In a very few minutes we had left behind us all signs of life and habitation, and were alone with the mountains. To our left hand, at the commencement, the torrent ran over its rocky bed, and soon nothing but the running stream and the road separated the two ranges of mountains. The water, notwithstanding the weather, was of a transparent emerald green of great clearness and beauty; beauty which yet must be considerably heightened

beneath the reflection of a blue sky and shining sun. Great boulders of rock stood out of the water, pieces of stone detached and fallen from the mountains; some of them worn away to an exact resemblance of colossal frogs in the act of leaping. Here and there small streams or cascades ran down the mountains from a great height. Almost from beginning to end we were journeying, as it were, in a dense pine forest, so thickly, up to the very summits, were the sides wooded. To-day, the trees looked sombre and cold and repelling.

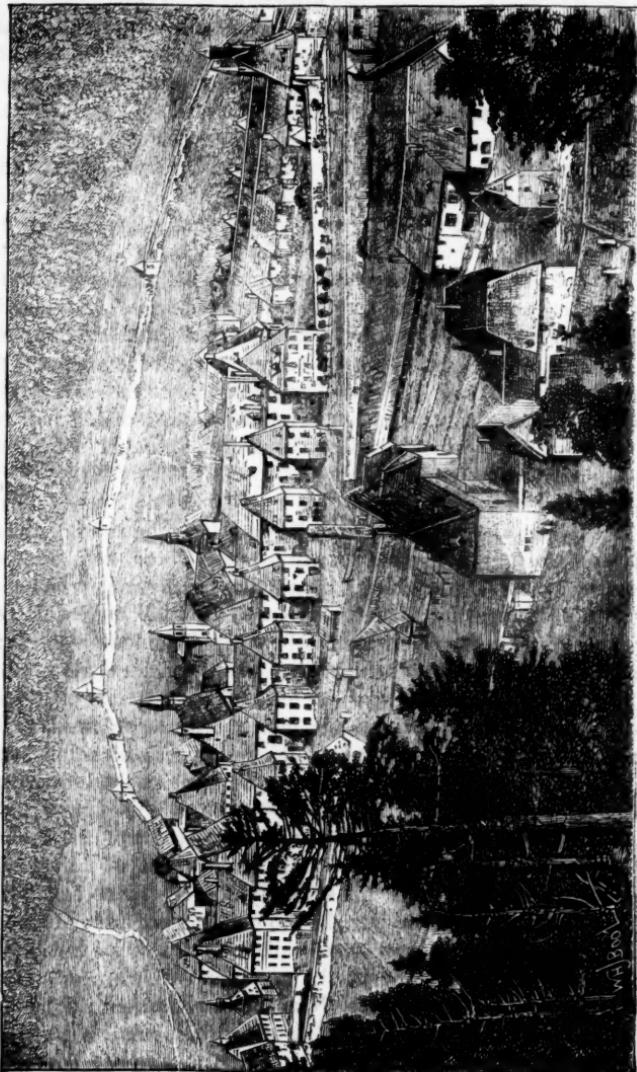
Soon after quitting the village we passed the last sign of habitation : a forge at Fourvoirie, situated most romantically by the torrent-side. The mountains ahead closing ; trees and branches overhanging the water, here spanned by an old, rustic, greystone bridge ; the forge immediately beside it giving life and colouring to the scene. At a little distance the torrent forms a picturesque fall of some feet, down which the green water pours with a faint roar (faint, at least, when mentally compared with such a fall as that of Gastein) ; and beyond the fall the ruined bridge of the old road, used by the monks in the early days of their history. For a striking coup-d'œil, for beauty and romance, it was not surpassed. After this, like the monks, we might indeed say that we had bidden the world farewell.

The precipices are of considerable height, the mountains in parts almost perpendicular. The new road is good, but time and labour have not been wasted, and there is no space to spare. You pass beside the limestone rocks, and sometimes beneath their overhanging projections, as in the accompanying illustration (No. 1) : and before reaching the monastery four short tunnels have to be entered, hollowed out in the rocks. Until the making of the present road, vehicles could not pass up ; and the timber cut in the upper forests was sawn into planks and conveyed down on the backs of the mules. At the old bridge there formerly existed a gateway, between the precipices and an obelisk of limestone called l'œillette ; and beyond this point in those early days no female was allowed to penetrate.

Before we were half way up, the snow lay thick upon the ground, and in the latter half of the ascent it began again to fall heavily. Ascending higher and higher, the snow lay deeper, and at half a mile from the convent we were compelled to quit the caléche and take to our legs. I don't know that I ever walked a more difficult half-mile. At every step we sank far into the snow, and it was very easy to realize its effect of inducing sleep. Near the convent the road, happily, had been somewhat cleared, for it lay everywhere pretty well a yard deep upon the ground.

But it was a very grand, almost solemn sight. The pine-trees around covered with their pale drapery ; all sign of green lost ; nothing but this pure, dazzling white, spreading itself through the branches and ramifications : a network of natural and marvellous beauty. In the

dark night they must have resembled tall ghosts, fitting inhabitants for this lonesome and desolate spot.



THE MONASTERY OF THE GRANDE CHARTREUSE.—III.

At length, a sudden turn ; and, perched amidst the pine forests, with rocky mountains in the distance, we perceived, with a rush of joy, the immense pile of the Monastery of the Grande Chartreuse.—C. W. W.

(Concluded next Month.)

ALL SOULS' EVE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

(Reprinted.)

ONE of the pleasantest spots in that part of France is the little commune of St. Eloi, so named after its church. It lies in the north, not many miles from Calais. One summer's day, years ago, two strange ladies were set down by the morning diligence at its only inn, or auberge, over whose door was written, *Ici on loge à pied et à cheval.*

The landlady came forward, in a blue petticoat and white bracers; sabots on her feet and a long broom in her hand. "What did mesdames please to require?"

"*Nous êtes viens—tell her Clara—pour avoir trouver some apartments,*" began the elder lady, in a tumult of confusion.

"Mesdames sont Anglaises?" interrupted the woman.

"Oui," hastily answered the elder lady; "that is, Irlandaises—it's all the same—and nous besoin des appartements. Vous comprengs? Why don't you explain, Clara, standing there as silent as a post?"

"Dear mamma, if you will allow me a moment to speak." And the young lady explained, in perfect French, that her mother, being in delicate health, required quiet, pure country air, and pure country milk; and that a friend had recommended St. Eloi. Could the landlady tell them of apartments?"

"Never was asked for such a thing before," responded the hostess. But at that moment a very handsome young man, tall and slender, rode up, sprang from his horse, tossed the bridle to the landlady, and spoke.

"I'll leave him here for five minutes, dame. Just put him in the stable as he is: while I go into Duterte's on an errand for my mother."

"Master Francis," cried the landlady, "these good English ladies want apartments. Do you believe there is such a thing to be had?"

The young man raised his hat to the ladies. "Could he have the honour of being of service to them?"

"Tell him, Clara—I can see he is a gentleman—he may be of more use to us than that ill-dressed landlady," cried Mrs. Fitzgerald. And the young lady, blushing, proceeded to do so.

The young man considered. "Truly, I don't know," he said. "I fear— This spot is so very small and retired, you see, that visitors rarely come to it, consequently no accommodation has ever been provided. Let me see—Madame Coe has a commodious house: what do you think of la mère Coe, dame?" turning to the landlady.

"Well, you have a talent for getting out of difficulties, Master Francis! Mother Coe has done nothing but grumble at the loneliness of her big house, since her daughters married, and at the easy life Babette leads of it. She might like somebody in it for company. Suppose you were to go and see, Master Francis?"

"What a civil, gentlemanly young man!" exclaimed the lady, looking after him as he moved away. "I always took young Frenchmen to be nothing but monkeys. Ask who he is, Clara?"

He was the young gentleman at the château, the landlady answered, François Latange, and owned a good bit of property in the commune—that is, his father did. Monsieur Latange was very old now, turned seventy, and sat in the chimney-corner all day, sucking tablettes.* Madame Latange was not fifty yet; a scolding, never-quiet dame, who ruled despotically the house, and the village, and especially Master Francis. He was the only child, heir to all; but Madame had a niece who lived with her, Mademoiselle Anastasie, a demoiselle of six-and-twenty with a vinegar face and a cherry-coloured coiffure, who looked after the kitchen sharper than Madame did, and scolded the servants twice to her once. Master Francis was betrothed to Mademoiselle Anastasie, and they were to be married when he was twenty-one: that would be in another year. The landlady hoped it would be a prosperous ménage: Madame had brought it all about: but some people had a notion that Master Francis was too fond of admiring pretty faces to put up exclusively with the plain one of Mademoiselle Anastasie.

She was interrupted by the return of Master Francis himself. He had seen Madame Coe (except in conversations of ceremony, like the present, that gentlewoman was familiarly styled *la mère Coe*), and thought matters might be arranged. Would the ladies allow him the honour of escorting them to her house?

Matters were arranged. Madame Coe was not less pleased to have her solitary rooms occupied, and to afford an increase of employment to her lazy maid Babette, than the ladies were to agree to her very reasonable terms. And in a few days they arrived finally with their luggage from Calais, and took up their abode in St. Eloi.

It was quite an event to the village, and everybody fell in love with Clara, who really was a very lovable young lady, with her charming beauty and her modest manners. Mrs. Fitzgerald at times got laughed at, and that was when she insisted on plunging wholesale into French. At first, a few styled them "English heretics," but they proved to be stanch Roman Catholics, with not a taint of heresy about them. Madame Latange did not take quite kindly to them. She hated and despised the English. But she condescendingly in-

* A sweetmeat made of treacle and butter, answering somewhat to the English "bull's-eye," much patronised by French people of all ages.

vited them to spend an occasional day at the château, where Clara had to make friends with Mademoiselle Anastasie. Master Francis and Miss Clara got on very well together. But we are coming to that by-and-by.

II.

THE time arrived for the tirage au sort of that year for the department of the Pas de Calais. Every French male subject, on approaching his twenty-first year, has to draw lots whether he shall be a soldier or not. There is no exception : the prince's son and the beggar's must alike hazard their chance. But when once the drawing is over, the equality ends ; for while the poor, if they fall, have no chance but to serve ; the rich, should they have been unlucky, provide a substitute.

Heavily rose the morning, and heavily rose the hearts in St. Eloi, on the day fixed for the tirage. Many a mother, sick with anxious suspense, saw her boy depart for Calais, with a wailing prayer to the Virgin that a high number might fall to him. They were mostly peasants' sons who went from St. Eloi ; and they started to walk, in their clean blue blouses and greased Sunday shoes ; started with heavy steps and still more heavy hearts : but Master Francis Latange, for his time had now come, rode forth from his father's house, well mounted, followed by his servant. It may indeed be said that what was as death to them was sport to him. Suppose he did fall ? Well, what of that ? a substitute was ready. Twenty substitutes had he needed them.

As he came to la mère Coe's house, he looked up at certain of its windows. A young, anxious face was at one of them ; and Master Francis leapt off his horse ; which Paul, the groom, rode up and held.

"Just a word, Clare, my dearest," he said, as he entered, "to bid me God-speed."

"Now why did you come in, Francis ?" she asked, in quite a cold sort of voice, though she was trembling with delight. "It is wrong."

"Bah, Clare ! I know now who it was that busied herself to tell you that rubbish about my mother. It came through that interesting cousin of mine, Mademoiselle Anastasie."

"It is of no consequence who it was, Francis. If—if—it is really so"—Clara seemed to hesitate for words—"that Madame Latange forbids your visits here, we cannot continue to receive you."

"We'll talk of that another time : my horse won't stand. Farewell, my love," he whispered, snatching also another sort of farewell. "There, Clare, my own ! that's what I came in for."

He was outside almost as he spoke, vaulting on his horse, and the blushing face of Clara peeped again from the window. He detected it, hidden though it nearly was by the curtain, and he smiled and bowed gallantly, riding away bareheaded till he was beyond her view.

"I wouldn't give my old clay pipe for Mam'selle Anastasie's chance

now," cogitated old Paul, shrewdly, as he trotted after his young master. "But I'm not going to split upon him to Madame."

Ah! those anxious hearts, those anxious faces, standing, that after noon, at their cottage doors! The day had turned out wretchedly cold, and pouring with rain. Francis Latange was back early.

"Oh, Master Francis," cried a woman, from the first door he came to, "what about my poor boy? His number —"

"First-rate, Mother Gris," interrupted the young man cheerily, riding on without stopping. "Ninety-six, I think."

"Thank the good God!" murmured the mother, falling down on her knees on the threshold, and drawing out her beads.

"Master Francis—a moment, sir!" implored an aged man, staggering across the road. "Has my grandson fallen?"

"I cannot tell you, Joseph," answered the young horseman, in a kindly tone; doubly kind, because he knew the news that was in store for the poor old man. "I did not get at all the numbers, you know."

"I feel he is down," moaned the old man, "though you won't tell it me, sir. Who is to work for me, in my years, when Jean shall be gone! His brother does nothing for me."

"Don't meet sorrow half-way, my poor Joseph. You shan't want a crust and a roof, even if Jean has to go."

"The saints protect him for a kind heart!" muttered the aged man, gazing after the horseman. "But—oh, Mother of Mercy, help me and my poor boy! I know he is fallen."

Mrs. Fitzgerald saw Master Francis coming, and threw her window up. "What speed?" she called out, as Clara glided to her side.

"Tombé," replied the young man, partly checking his horse; "my number was seventeen. So I can go for a soldier, now, as soon as I please." And Clara's very lips turned white as he cantered on.

The next morning, as Clara was making the breakfast, Madame Coe came in. "I have news to tell you, Miss Clare," she began, "and I'll tell it before Madame your mamma comes down—I know I did not want my mother to ferret into my private affairs when I was a demoiselle. There was a great dispute up at the château last night."

"A dispute!" repeated Clara.

"Between Master Francis and his mother. Mam'selle Adèle, who was up there yesterday doing some dressmaking, told me. It seems they were talking about the substitute for Master Francis, and that brought up other matters. Madame began to speak of his marriage, and Master Francis stopped her, quite carelessly like, and said he did not intend to carry out the marriage, for he thought he and Mam'selle Anastasie would not suit each other."

Clara changed colour.

"And the joke of it was, that Mam'selle Anastasie had got her ear to the partition, along with Mam'selle Adèle, and heard it," continued the

Mother Coe, in perfect glee. "Then Madame set-to, and wrangled with him ; and Master Francis brought out that he liked somebody else better —and of course, my dear, we know who that is. Upon which Madame's rage ran sky high, and she gave him a flat box on both his ears. He is to serve his seven years. Madame will not buy him a substitute. In her passion she swore it."

"But his father?" Clara shivered, much shocked and bewildered.

"His father! My dear, you might as well speak of a block of wood. Whatever Madame decrees, is law. She tamed the spirit out of her old husband years ago."

"But the property is his—the estate, the money; it is not hers."

"Just as much his as it is mine, for any manner of use," persisted Dame Coe. "He dare not ask for a sou, that old man, and he never has one. He might as well ask Madame for her head as for money to buy his son off, unless she chose to give it. No, Miss Clara. Femme Latange has not sworn to many things in her life, but she has to this. Poor Master Francis must serve."

Mademoiselle Adèle's report was substantially correct. Master Francis had declined to marry Mam'selle Anastasie, and when his mother defiantly urged the contract, he said the contract might go and be hanged—to speak politely. So then she boxed his ears. Upon which, Master Francis, his cheeks tingling with pain, and himself with anger, boldly avowed there was only one woman in the world should call him husband, and that was Clara Fitzgerald. Madame jigged about the room with rage, and finally fell on her knees and *swore* that he should serve his seven years as a soldier; she would find him no substitute. At the end of that period he would come back glad enough to take to himself his deserving cousin Anastasie.

Oh, he would serve, Francis replied with bravado, and glad to do so; anything to get away from home tyranny. But he thought Mademoiselle Anastasie need not trouble herself to wait for him.

Everybody said that before the time came for the calling out of the new recruits, Madame would grow cool and reasonable: she never would permit her fine son, of whom she was so proud, to serve as a soldier. It is probable that these were precisely Madame's own intentions. But one early day, long before Madame or St. Eloi expected it, an order descended on the village like a clap of thunder. The new recruits were to join forthwith: *for war had broken out with Russia.*

War! Francis Latange to go forth and be shot at! Madame came to her senses at once: and she ordered the horses to the lumbering, window-rattling old family coach, that she might jog off to Calais to see about the substitute.

"Spare yourself the trouble, mother," said Francis. "I shall serve my time."

"We are at war," shrieked Madame. "You'll get killed."

"I daresay I shall. And not be sorry, either. Anything for a quiet life. You might have purchased a substitute *before* the war broke out, but none shall say that Francis Latange shirked his duty now."

"The grief will kill me," wailed Madame.

"Oh no, it won't," returned Francis. "You and Mam'selle Anastasie will just go on as much alive as ever, looking after the eggs, and blowing up the servants."

Madame melted into tears. "Francis, you are ungrateful. Won't you reflect that you are very dear to me: the day-star of my life, the apple of my eye?"

"Well, mother, you have taken the wrong way to show it; treating me as a child, and magging the peace out of me."

"I *will* get you a substitute, my son," she passionately broke forth. "Or, if you must go to the war, you shall have your commission."

"Listen, mother," he answered. "You have suffered my name to stand enrolled, these many weeks, as one of the ranks, and as such I will serve. Do you fear I am a coward? Would I like the reproach, of being one, cast at me?"

The village all turned out to see the recruits depart; there was not a dry eye in it. Francis Latange went with the rest, and his mother flung herself down on her knees in the mud of the road, to pray the Virgin for his safe return. Mam'selle Anastasie was behind her, also on her knees, telling her beads. This was nothing extraordinary for that moment of painful emotion at St. Eloi.

Francis had stolen a meeting with Clara Fitzgerald the evening before. He had not seen much of her lately; for Clara had refused to meet him in opposition to his mother. But now that he was going away, perhaps for ever, she was as anxious as he for a parting interview. She had learnt to love him deeply, passionately; and when the last moment of farewell came, her anguish rose in convulsive sobs.

"Do not grieve so, Clara," he whispered, fondly laying her head upon his shoulder. "I may be back sooner than you think. If the war should abruptly end, as many prophesy it will, they may then send a substitute for me, and I will come home. But rest assured of one thing, Clara: that when I do come, be it sooner or later, it shall be to win you for my wife. God protect you, my love, for ever and for ever."

But the war did not come to an end, and the months dragged themselves slowly on. A letter now and then found its way from Francis to his father, and to Clara Fitzgerald. These letters gave the leading incidents in the progress of the allied armies, the landing in the Crimea, the battle of the Alma, and the long and terrible siege of Sebastopol. The summer of 1855 came round, and the troops were still *before* Sebastopol, not in it.

It would really seem, at least it did to the village, that Mrs. Fitzgerald was going to be a fixture at St. Eloi. But Mrs. Fitzgerald was not rich, and she was unwilling to quit a locality where she saved no inconsiderable portion of her income. With the exception of a week or two's absence occasionally, she had now been two years at St. Eloi.

July came in ; and with it the news of the disastrous battle of the 17th and 18th of June before Sebastopol, when the allied armies were repulsed in their attempt to take the Malakhof and the Redan. It was rumoured that the loss of the French was frightful, and St. Eloi trembled for the safety of its children. But they had to wait many days yet for the details and the names of the fallen.

The official returns came at last, and Monsieur le Commissaire de Police, who in his own august person did duty for the maire, préfet, and the rest of the authorities in a larger town, stood in his bureau, ready to read over the list of the slain. The poor villagers were crowding in : those who had relatives at the war in dread fear, those who had not, from sympathy and curiosity. The Commissaire was opening his mouth to begin, when a movement amongst his audience took place ; they were pushing each other back, treading on toes, and humbly squeezing themselves into nothing, to make way for a feeble old gentleman who was entering. It was Monsieur Latange. He had actually come out of his chimney-corner, and walked down from his château. Monsieur le Commissaire stepped forth, bowing, from behind his desk, and installed his guest in his own office-chair.

"Attention !" shouted the Commissaire. And he proceeded to read out the list in his most official voice.

"For the commune of St. Eloi. Return of those killed in the engagement of the 18th of June, before Sebastopol :

"Jean-Marie Dubuis.

"Robert Eloi Hans.

"Paul Vanderwelde.

"François Latange."

C'est tout, mes amis, grâce à Dieu ! " concluded the Commissaire, taking off his spectacles.

There was a moment of dead silence, and then a burst of sobs and smothered cries arose from the listeners, in the midst of which the poor old Proprietor fell heavily from his chair. They picked him up, and M. le Commissaire went to the pump, in the yard behind his bureau, and fetched some water. It restored him : but the hope of his old age was gone. Père Latange had truly loved his son.

Madame Latange was a changed woman from that day. It was not only her happiness, but the *pride* of her existence, that had left her with her son's life. She never knew until now how entirely her hopes had been concentrated in that son's future. Madame spent a little fortune in masses for his soul—for which the priests prayed their best. And

she ordered a handsome tombstone to be placed in the cemetery to his memory. Mademoiselle Anastasie consoled herself by accepting the addresses of a neighbouring farmer : who, having become possessed of the notion that she would now be the inheritor, had hastened to offer them.

But the grief of Clara Fitzgerald ! None saw its outward signs, save in her now invariably languid manner and pallid cheek. Babette set that down to her mother's illness. For Mrs. Fitzgerald had been seized with rheumatic fever ; and lay a martyr to suffering and fractiousness. And the weeks flew on again.

III.

BOOM ! boom ! boom ! The heavy bell of St. Eloi's church, never heard but on state occasions, or when a fire happened in the commune, suddenly tolled out at evening twilight. Boom ! boom ! boom !

Clara started in nervousness from the chair she occupied in Babette's kitchen. Anxiety on her mother's account, combined with her own secret sorrow, was beginning to tell on her nerves and health.

"Babette ! hark there ! It must be a fire."

"Sit yourself down again, Miss Clare, and look to your saucepan," responded Babette. "You are forgetting the fête of to-morrow : All Saints' Day. The bell's thundering out for that."

Clara resumed her place on the wooden chair by the stove, and went on stirring the arrowroot in the saucepan. Mrs. Fitzgerald, more peevish than ever, now she was recovering, fancied none of these messes, unless they were prepared by her daughter. So Clara made frequent visits to Babette's kitchen, to the complete satisfaction of that valuable domestic, who invariably treated her to a dish of gossip.

"My faith ! isn't la patronne going to be smart to-morrow !" she began, in a half whisper, jerking her head in the direction of Madame Coe's salle-à-manger, where that lady was snugly ensconced, her feet and her petticoats over an open charcoal chauffrette. "She has been having her purple velvet bonnet done up with green ribbons and grapes, and she has got a new cloth mantle ; one of them round grey things just come up. What are you going to wear new to-morrow, Miss Clare ?"

"I ?" answered Clara, languidly. "Nothing."

"Nothing !" retorted Babette. "But you are going to church ?"

"Of course," answered the young lady.

"And as if folks went there in old clothes to-morrow ! I wouldn't show my face at church on All Saints' Day in a cap I had worn before, if I knew I should get a sweetheart by it. You have not been here on the First of November, Miss Clare ?"

"No, we have been in England both years. Mamma receives her rents then. I have never been in France on the day of All Saints."

"Then, it's kept in this village, I can tell you, Mademoiselle ! The grand bell, that's stunning us now, begins at five in the morning, and never leaves off all day. And the church is kept open till ten at night. You should see the candles that are burnt in it after dark. Hundreds of them."

"Why, yes !" interrupted Clara, in sudden recollection ; "to-morrow night is the Eve of All Souls ! The night when we pray for the dead !"

"And wherever were your wits, Mademoiselle, that you have only just thought of that ?" asked Babette, with that familiarity of manner characteristic of French servants : who, however, with all their freedom of speech, do not lose sight of respect.

"Is it the custom here to kneel in the cemetery and pray on the Day of the Dead ?" questioned Clara.

"I should think it is the custom everywhere," answered Babette, indignation in her tone at the superfluous question. "Dry or wet, we all go, if we have any dead to pray for ; and those who've not go for company. That arrowroot's thickening, Miss Clare."

"Do you go, Babette ?"

"What should hinder me ?" asked Babette. "And la patronne," with another jerk of the head towards the salle-à-manger, "gives me two hours to-morrow afternoon for church. But there's one thing I would not do, Mademoiselle ; and that is, go out to pray to-morrow night."

"Why not ?" asked Clara.

"Catch me stirring abroad after dark on All Souls' Eve ! Why, you know, Miss Clare, that the spirits come out of purgatory then, and appear to you."

"Superstitious people say so, Babette. But it is not true."

"Oh, well—if you know better than those who have seen them. *I have seen them,*" concluded Babette, resolutely.

"You may have fancied so."

"I saw my sister's husband. She, hard-hearted creature ! had got married again, so, of course, it was no use its appearing to *her*. I was scuttering along in the dark to the church—it's six years ago this same blessed November—and there I beheld something without form, a fluttering of wings like, just before me, high in the air. I knew it was my poor brother-in-law's soul, released for that night out of purgatory, and I fell flat down on my face in a pool of water, and never dared to get up again till some passers-by led me home. You may well fancy, Mademoiselle, that I have not put myself outside the door since on All Souls' Eve. But oh, my heart, Miss Clare ! have you heard what Madame Latange is going to do ?"

"No," answered Clara, rousing up at the name.

"Master Francis's tombstone is completed, and in the cemetery. The most superb slab, they say : a white urn, and a willow on black

marble that you may see your face in, and gold letters for the inscription. It must have cost money, though, that tablet."

The spoon had dropped into the arrowroot, and lay there. Babette's voice fell to a still lower key.

"She is going to church to-morrow night at seven, and when the candles are burnt out—she's to have some dozens, they say, all alight together—she goes off straight to the cemetery, to pray over this new stone. She *is*, Miss Clare."

"But it is not the custom to pray in the cemetery to-morrow night," debated the young lady, forgetting the spoon and the arrowroot.

"Never was yet," responded Babette. "But Madame lays his death at her own door, and she thinks to expiate some of his time in purgatory, poor young gentleman, by praying-in the Day of the Dead. She'll kneel in the cemetery until the clocks have told midnight."

"All alone?" shivered Clara.

"Not she. Plenty of commères will go with her for the novelty of the thing. I wouldn't be one: and risk seeing his spirit—which is certain to appear. Do you notice how thin she's got?"

Clara replied by a faint moan. Her face was hidden in her hands.

"She's like a shadow, compared to what she was when Master Francis was at home; and as to her dead-and-alive old husband—— There's your arrowroot all gone, Miss Clare!" screamed out Babette, by way of conclusion. "And now you must begin some more! I'll put on a handful of braises and get up the fire."

All Saints' Day is the greatest religious fête, except Easter, in the Catholic calendar. The church decorations, the music, the rich robes of the priests, and the brilliancy of the ladies' toilets, are perfect on the fête of Toussaint. A strange contrast does the following day present, All Souls'; or, as the French emphatically express it, the Jour des Morts. There are no gaudy colours in dress then; no decorations. The world attires itself in sombre black; the glittering tints in the priests' robes are replaced by black and white; the church is hung with black, and nothing meets the eye, inside it, but deaths' heads, and cross-bones, and skulls elevated on poles; whilst in the bowed, craped heads of the hushed congregation you behold real mourners. People in the large towns do not go to the cemetery, to kneel on the damp earth and pray, quite so universally as they used; but in the small rural communes, such as St. Eloi, none omit it. The superstition, that the souls of the deceased come out of purgatory after dark on All Souls' Eve and hover in the air, waiting to appear to any of their relatives who may venture abroad, is most religiously believed by the lower orders; and by a good many of their betters also. The supposed object of their appearing is to remind these their relatives to pray for them on the Jour des Morts: and with the first glimmer of that sombre day's dawn, the poor spirits wing their flight back to purgatory.

IV.

ALL SAINTS' DAY at last ! and a very fine one. It was to be an eventful day, take it for all in all. Breakfast over, Clara left her mother to the care of the French nurse and prepared to go out.

"Have you seen her, Miss Clare?" whispered Babette, as she traversed the passage to open the house-door for the young lady.

"Seen whom?"

"La patronne," answered Babette, with one of her favourite sidelong towards the staircase. "She'll be down by-and-by, as fine as an empress, in her brown satin gown ; and she's putting white net sleeves over her old wrists, and there's a pair of straw-coloured gloves lying on the commode by her bonnet and new cloak. Won't some cats have tails!"

"Open the door, Babette. I shall be late at mass."

"Not so late as she'll be. When she comes out en grande tenue, she's always an hour at her toilet. But for the love of all the saints, Mademoiselle," continued the unceremonious Babette, running her eyes over Clara, "why did you keep on your old *mourning* to-day? And all the commune so elegant!—and you with those lovely dresses in your garde-robe! I'm sure that uncle of Madame your mamma's has had the mourning worn for him these six months. It's getting to look quite rusty."

"Oh, what matters it—black or white?" uttered Clara, the grieved feeling in her heart finding vent, as the woman spoke about *mourning*. "Don't keep me here, Babette. I want to go."

Babette moved her back from against the door ; and Clara, passing out, found herself face to face with Madame Latange, with whom she had held no intercourse since the departure of Francis. She would willingly have shrunk away now, but Babette had shut the door.

"Don't look so scared, young lady," said the latter, in a kind tone, to Clara's very great astonishment. "I am not going to reproach you. *He* is gone ; and, to indulge ill-feeling will not bring him back again. Perhaps I might have liked you better, but you see I had set my mind on his marrying Anastasie. She was just the wife for him, for she would have kept the château together, and things in the kitchen from going to rack and ruin, and checked Francis in his generous fits."

Madame paused, but Clara did not answer.

"She has been ungrateful, has Anastasie. Actually gone and promised to marry a man who is at mortal enmity with me—Farmer Brun. He won a lawsuit from me last year. Since then, my dear, it has crossed my mind that you might have made him as good a wife as she ; so let us be friends. We'll go to mass together."

Clara went. Walking into church side by side with Madame to the wondering astonishment of all the gazers in it.

"Mother," said Clara, as she sat by her mother's bedside that evening, when the shades of night were gathering, "you have no objection to my accompanying Madame Latange to pray to-night?"

"Madame Latange!"

"I told you, dear mother, I met her this morning, and how pleasant she was. She is coming to see you, when to-morrow is over."

"What good's Madame Latange to do me?" querulously interrupted Mrs. Fitzgerald. "I don't like her. Breaking off her acquaintance with us, as she did, without reason!"

"She goes to-night to pray for her son; in the church and at his tombstone. May I make one of those who join her?"

"What, in the cemetery? Nonsense. You'll catch your death."

"Oh no, I shall be well wrapped up. We knew poor Francis"—Clara's voice trembled. "Let me make one to pray for the repose of his soul."

"I don't see why its repose need trouble you," returned Mrs. Fitzgerald. "Quite the contrary. I had used to think he was inclined to flirt with you, and that you encouraged him. There's nothing so unladylike for a young girl as flirting, Clara."

"Well, mamma, you will not have that to complain of again," sighed Clara. "I may go with Madame?"

"Now, I don't want to be teased. My arms are in excruciating pain, and it's nothing to me whether you go or not. But if you catch rheumatic fever in the cemetery, there'll be nobody to nurse you, recollect."

A goodly company of commères, as Babette had expressed it, went forth that night with Madame Latange. The great bell boomed out incessantly: the church was crowded with devout groups, bowed in silence before their many candles, the grease from which guttered down on the stone floor; and the priests, for the last time that long day, sang over their monotonous chants. A little before nine, the last candle offered up by Madame Latange had expired.

The cemetery lay beyond the village. It was a dreary walk to it at all times, between the two straight rows of poplars. The stout hearts of some of the commères failed; and they turned home on leaving the church. Mademoiselle Anastasie, who was a very coward, had been brought by her aunt against her will.

"For the love of Heaven, don't go, my aunt," she implored, with chattering teeth; "wait till daylight. The shades will have returned to purgatory then, and we can all join you, and pray in peace. Should *he* appear to us, I should just die of fright."

Madame Latange's only answer was the taking of Mam'selle Anastasie by the arm, and marching her off towards the cemetery. Her serving man, Paul, walked first with a blazing torch, and the group of courageous commères huddled close behind, holding on to one another.

"But is Madame herself not afraid to behold the spirit of poor Master

Francis?" ventured Paul, who by no means admired the position assigned him in the march.

"My eyes have ached to see him so long that they would rejoice in the sight," replied his mistress, with valiance.

"Igh!—igh!—igh!" burst out Mam'selle Anastasie, in a succession of shrill screams. "What's that looking over the hedge?"

Considerable confusion ensued. Cries of horror. Everybody laying hold of everybody else's clothes.

"I tell you what it is, ladies," said the unfortunate torchbearer, standing stock still, "if you are to frighten one like this, I can't go on in advance. Madame must forgive me when I say I'd rather lose my place first."

"Courage," commanded Madame Latange. "If you all walk linked, and bend your eyes on the ground, there'll be no danger of seeing anything. As for Mademoiselle Anastasie, should she frighten us again, I shall leave her in the hedge by herself till we come back."

The threat imposed silence on Mademoiselle Anastasie, and the procession resumed its march. It came to the gate of the cemetery, and bore on through its cold grass to the corner, where stood the tablet to the memory of Francis Latange.

It was a handsome erection of black marble: a white urn and drooping willow carved on it.

François Latange,

Fils unique de Pierre Latange et de Françoise de Brie.

Tué devant Sébastopol le 18 de Juin, 1855, âgé de 22 ans.

Priez pour lui.

They sank on their knees around the stone, and the sobs of the *mother* broke forth aloud. Clara Fitzgerald's head was pressed on the cold marble, her grief was silent; but many wept in concert with Madame. And so they knelt, and sobbed, and prayed, their faces hidden: a strange group to look on, in that dark night, in that lonely graveyard!

Paul's torch was coming to an end. Rising, he proceeded to light another. This little diversion caused la mère Coe to look up. Being middle-aged and stout, she was getting tired of her kneeling position. The cramp was coming into her legs.

A hideous shriek! an unearthly howl! and Madame Coe, from whom they proceeded, flung her arms round the legs of the startled Paul, and buried her face against them, and howled interminably. Whatever had taken la mère Coe?

"There he is! his own spectre!" she burst forth, her voice shrill with terror. "I knew it would appear."

Paul raised his torch; the unhappy devotees looked as high in the air as its light would allow. Standing close by his own tombstone, his head bending forward as if to read its inscription, was the spectre of Francis Latange. Thin, worn, his cheeks pale, his eyes sunk, there it

was, with only one arm, and in a faded old suit of regiments. No doubt the clothes he had died in.

What had been the screams of the Mother Coe to those which now ensued? Not a saint in the calendar but was invoked with every variety of terrified aspiration; and the wretched group started to their feet and rushed away, pell-mell, out of the haunted cemetery. Paul, dropping his torch, and ungallantly shaking off the ladies, flew off in front; the ghost went after them; some choking, some praying, and the rest yelling. The noise penetrated nearly all the way to St. Eloï.

Clara Fitzgerald did not fly with the rest. In rising, her foot caught in a tuft of grass, and she was thrown heavily down again. Her companions were then at a distance, and she remained, clasping the marble stone, overcome with faintness and extremity of terror. The ghost came striding back again, in very unghostly fashion. It took up the flickering torch, and held it to her face.

"Clare," it gently said—and, with the words, Clara began to suspect it was no ghost, but real flesh and blood—"do I frighten *you*?"

But she was too terrified still to answer: and her teeth chattered, and her frame shook.

"I have still one arm left," he said, digging the torch in the earth, so that it still gave its light, and passing his arm round Clara. "Those terrified women must have taken me for my own spectre, for I see you have my death recorded here. Some mistake in the returns."

"But is it really you?" she said, bursting into tears. "We thought you were dead."

"So I was nearly, Clare. They took me up for dead last June, in the storming of the Malakhof. I have come home to recruit my strength, come home for good: a one-armed man is useless as a soldier. Perhaps you too will reject me now."

Her tears flowed on. Delicious tears!

"Oh, Clare," he whispered, as he held her to him, "though I have only one arm left, it shall be found powerful to protect you through life—my cherished wife. I said I would come home to you, my darling. None knew the fervent prayer I offered up for it, save God. He heard and blessed it."

"But did you drop from the clouds?" demanded Madame Latange, in the midst of her tears, when Francis got home.

"No, mother, I dropped from the diligence. We were invalided home, *via* Marseilles, and I reached Calais to-day. There I got a banquette place in the six o'clock diligence. The first face I saw here was Père Duterté's; when he recovered from his wonder, he volunteered the information that a company had just started to pray for me in the cemetery. So I thought I'd go after it, and send Duterté up here first to break the news to my father. How you all screamed!"

"But you are so piteously thin and ill, Francis! And your one arm! It is dreadful."

"Never mind, mother. I shall get strong again. And for my lost arm—it might have been worse."

"François, mon cher," uttered the old man, with imploring eyes, "you will not go away again?"

"Never, father. I have sown my wild oats, and have come home to settle. If my mother will allow me."

"Yes, I will, my son," she replied, with a pointed meaning in her tone. "Mademoiselle Anastasie's going to settle herself also, Francis. With the Farmer Brun."

"It is not fixed; there's nothing decided; I'm not obliged to have him, now my cousin is come home," eagerly interrupted Mademoiselle Anastasie. "And I think the Farmer Brun an old bear."

"You should have discovered that before," said Madame Latange.

"She will make you a dutiful daughter, mother dear," whispered Francis, "though she is an English girl. Will you not try her?"

"I suppose I shall have to do so, my son. You may go to-morrow, with my love, and fetch her to dinner."

"A nice wife she'll make!" called out Mam'selle Anastasie, red with spite. "She'll never look after the eggs. They'll be half lost—you'll see! And I know she could not make an omelette if she tried."

"I'll teach her," said Madame.

"Grâce à Dieu!" cried old Père Latange.

THE DEACON'S POTATOES.

AN old lady sat in her old arm-chair,
With wrinkled face and dishevell'd hair,
And pale and hunger-worn features;
For days and for weeks her only fare,
As she sat there in her old arm-chair,
Had been nothing but potatoes.

And now they were gone: of bad or good
Not one was left for the old lady's food,
Of these her stock of potatoes;
And she sigh'd and said, "What shall I do?
Where shall I send, and to whom shall I go
To get some more potatoes?"

And she thought of the deacon over the way,
The deacon so ready to worship and pray,
Whose cellar was full of potatoes;
And she said, "I will send for the deacon to come,
He'll not mind much to give me some
Of such a store of potatoes."

The Deacon's Potatoes.

And the deacon came over as fast as he could,
Thinking to do the old lady some good,

But never thought once of potatoes ;
He ask'd her directly to tell her *chief* want,
And she, simple soul, expecting a grant,
Immediately answer'd, "Potatoes."

But the deacon's religion went not that way,
He was more accustom'd to preach and to pray,
Than to give of his hoarded potatoes ;
So, not hearing, of course, what the old lady said,
He rose to pray with uncover'd head ;
But *she* only thought of potatoes.

He pray'd for patience, for wisdom and grace,
But when he pray'd, "O Lord give her peace,"

She audibly sigh'd "Give potatoes ;"
And at the end of each prayer that he said,
He heard, or he thought that he heard, in its stead,
The same request for potatoes.

The deacon was troubled—knew not what to do ;
'Twas embarrassing, very, to have her act so
About "those carnal potatoes !"

About "those carnal potatoes !"
So ending his prayer, he started for home ;
As the door closed behind him, he heard a deep groan,
"Oh, give to the hungry, potatoes!"

And that groan followed him all the way home ;
In the midst of the night it haunted his room,
"Oh, give to the hungry, potatoes !"
He could bear it no longer—arose and dress'd,
From his well-fill'd cellar taking in haste
A bag of his best potatoes.

Again he went to the widow's lone hut,
Her sleepless eyes she had not yet shut,
But there she sat in her old arm-chair,
With the same wan features, the same sad air ;
So, entering in, he pour'd on the floor
A bushel or more from his goodly store
Of the very best potatoes.

"Now," said the deacon, "shall we pray ?"
"Yes," said the widow, "*now* you may ;"
And he kneel'd him down on the sanded floor,
Where he had pour'd his goodly store—
The widow's heart leap'd up for joy,
Her face was haggard and wan nō more.
And such a prayer the deacon pray'd
As never before his lips essay'd :
No longer embarrass'd, but free and full,
He pour'd out the voice of a liberal soul,
And the widow responded aloud, "Amen !"
But said no more of potatoes.

And would you, who hear this simple tale,
Pray for the poor, and praying, "prevail,"
Then preface your prayers with alms and good deeds ;
Search out the poor, with their cares and their needs ;
Pray for peace, and grace, and heavenly food,
For wisdom and guidance ; for these are all good
But don't forget the *potatoes*.

AFTER YEARS OF WAITING.

"I SHALL see you to-night, Mrs. Kathlane?"

"At the Grangers! Yes, I shall be there. I hope it won't be a crush."

"Why? I rather like a crush."

"Oh. A crush makes me feel vicious."

Rupert Thornbury smiled as he looked down at the speaker. Something had evidently put her out. "Are you often viciously disposed, Mrs. Kathlane? It is news to me."

"I wish you would not call me that, Rupert. Mrs. Kathlane! You do it on purpose, and I don't like it."

The last words were spoken like a petulant child; and there was a cloud on the face which looked up for a moment from the soft vividly coloured wools which the white and slender fingers were knitting into some incomprehensible "fancy-work." A very beautiful face it was, and a very beautiful woman was little Mrs. Kathlane; and no one in the wide world was more thoroughly convinced of that fact than Rupert Thornbury.

She was slight and small in figure—girlish looking still, despite her four and twenty years. No other woman would have dared, with her complexion, to wear the colours which she did; often in defiance of ordinary rules. She wore, this morning, a deep, royal purple dress, with purple bands in her dark hair, and looked, as no other woman could have looked—charming. Her hair drooped over her forehead in lustrous waves, and was fastened behind with a high, golden comb. Her face was almost marvellous in its perfect form and brilliant colouring; and her great dark eyes, with their long lashes, were enough of themselves to turn an ordinary man's head.

"I don't like it," she said again, glancing at her companion, who was abstractedly tangling the bright wools, apparently lost in thought, "and I shall be seriously angry with you if you persist in being so formal. For it is formal, after you have known me since I was a little child, to speak as though we were strangers."

"I'll not call you so again, Millicent. Only—" Mr. Thornbury paused.

"Only what?" returned the imperious little lady, giving him another searching glance.

"Things have changed a great deal since you were a child, Millicent. You are a woman now, wealthy, courted, flattered; and I—but it is no good talking of these things. I must be going. Will you promise me the first waltz to-night?"

"Certainly. I hope you appreciate my kindness. I waltz very rarely, you know."

"I do appreciate it: and now I must go down to that 'stupid old office,' as you call it, and make up for lost time. Good-morning, Millicent—don't forget your promise," and then he was gone. Gone, and unconscious, as he walked swiftly down the street, that Millicent Kathlane's dark eyes were looking after him, and that when she turned back to her work, a soft sigh fluttered from her beautiful lips, and a shadow clouded her face.

He had known her, as she said, since she was a little child; and he, a strong, rude lad, had loved the flower-faced little Millicent dearly; and when, at the age of eighteen, he had been sent away from his home to qualify himself to play a part in the work of life, it was with a secret determination to return after years had passed, and claim her. Although she was a child not a dozen years old, she had taken the warmest place in his warm heart for her own.

Years passed by, and Rupert Thornbury worked hard and well, but the fortune he so ardently wished for never came. He was an honourable man; and crushing his own heart back, he took his father's burdens on his strong, young shoulders, and bore them bravely. Only once he faltered, and that was when, after scarcely six years had passed since he first went out into the world, news came to him that Millicent, his "little Milly," was married. It was her father's wish, the gossips said. Mr. Kathlane, the suitor, was immensely wealthy, and having been fascinated by Millicent's beauty, her parents had used all their influence with her; and the end was, she married. Millicent, now Mrs. Kathlane, went away to her husband's home; and Rupert Thornbury wearily went on with his dull, distasteful labour, with not even the old boyish dream to lighten his task.

Six years more passed slowly by, making many changes in the affairs of both. Mr. Kathlane died suddenly after two or three years of married life, and Millicent went abroad with some friends.

She had been back nearly a year now, and had settled down to a town life. During this period the old childish friendship for Rupert Thornbury had been warmly renewed; and Rupert had discovered that, charming as she was in her childhood and girlhood, now that she was a woman she was infinitely more so.

During this year, life had grown a great deal brighter to Mr. Thornbury; he was prospering, slowly and steadily, and had gained many friends. Anxious mammas looked upon him with favour, and many bright eyes gave him bewitching glances; hitherto in vain. His whole heart—and he knew it—was still with Millicent Kathlane: but her marriage had raised her, both as to wealth and position, so far above himself, that he did not, except at some fond, delusive moment, dare to

aspire to her. He was only a city man, plodding on in his close city office with his three or four clerks under him.

"How beautiful she is!" he thought, as he walked away from the house. "Just the same little Milly at heart, too, as in the dear old days. And her glances—oh, if I might dare to believe in them!—seem as true to me as they were then. But what would the world say?"

That night saw him at Mrs. Granger's: a fashionable woman, with some fashionable daughters, one of whom, Cornelia, had made a dead set at Mr. Thornbury. He stood in the lighted rooms, watching eagerly for Millicent: but it was not until very late that she arrived. As she came down the long rooms—moving as easily and gracefully as though she had been, from earliest childhood, accustomed to reign in society—a murmur of admiration followed her.

She was dressed in a trailing robe of pale, silvery blue, with an over-dress of soft, white lace; her beautiful neck and arms were bare, save for their ornaments of fretted gold; her face was untouched by paint or powder, and her vivid colouring made her beauty seem almost unearthly as compared with some of the inane faces around her. Her black hair, elaborately dressed, was fastened here and there with drooping sprays of scarlet flowers, and at her bosom, looping her over-dress, and in her jewelled *bouquetière*, the scarlet buds glowed and burned.

"Is she not lovely?" That was a question which every one felt could be answered but in the affirmative. And many an envious heart was hidden under the smiling faces which greeted her.

"There is Mrs. Kathlane, Mr. Thornbury," said Cornelia Granger, a tall, pale, ill-natured girl, to whom Rupert had been saying civil nothings for the last few minutes, and who was furiously jealous of Mrs. Kathlane in her heart of hearts. "You gentlemen are wild about her, I believe. Red and blue—what excruciating taste! I wonder her maid does not teach her better."

"Every one has not your critical eyes, Miss Granger," said Rupert, laughing. "I thought her dress charming."

"Of course." Miss Cornelia was not an amiable girl, as we have said, and at that moment her temper was pinching her rather sourly. "Perhaps you make one of those who are wild over her, Mr. Thornbury?"

"It would be of no use to me, I expect, if I were," replied Rupert, in his candour.

"Well, I suppose not—as she is so soon to be married again."

"Married again!" he uttered.

"So report runs," said Miss Granger, toying with her fan.

"To whom? I had not heard of it."

"To Mr. Worthington: a cousin of her late husband, you know."

"I know him," cried Rupert, feeling he knew not how. "Dick Worthington's not worthy of *her*. It would be desecration."

"She may not think so. It is said there was a great deal of intimacy before Mr. Kathlane died. She married him simply for his money—that's well known—and the handsome cousin used to be a very frequent visitor. There was a deal of gossip about it at the time, and—but there's Dick Worthington now. Look how her colour rises when she speaks to him."

"Are you quite certain your information is correct, Miss Granger?"
The pale eyes glanced at him again, and then looked away.

"About the engagement? Quite sure, Mr. Thornbury. At least, the world is sure of it. I am neither more nor less wise than it."

Mr. Thornbury did not change colour at the news, or seem, in reality, to feel much surprise; he stood laughing and chatting with the young lady for a few moments on different subjects, and then, excusing himself, sauntered across the room to where Mrs. Kathlane sat, surrounded by an admiring group, of whom Richard Worthington was one.

"It is my waltz," said Mr. Thornbury, as she looked up, and greeted him with one of her brightest smiles. "Or are you too tired?"

"Tired?" She laughed a little silvery laugh as she rose. "I am never tired of dancing. Richard, I will leave my flowers and fan with you as a hostage."

It was nothing, this leaving with him her fan and flowers—it was like a thousand other little coquettish ways which she had—but Rupert thinking—oh! so bitterly—of what had just been told him, fancied that he saw something deeper than her usual light coquetry in the glance she gave the handsome young fellow, and groaned in spirit. It seemed a full confirmation of what he had heard.

"One, two, three. One, two, three. You are shockingly out of step, Rupert!" said she, after the first turn. "What is the matter? You look as stern as if you had seen a ghost."

"I have," he said, almost grimly—"the ghost of a dead hope;" and she, half-frightened at his tone, looked up at him questioningly. But in another moment he smiled back at her, and she was reassured.

"Don't talk nonsense, Rupert. There! you are dancing beautifully now. What were you and that odious Cornelia Granger talking about so long?"

"Odious do you call her?"

"Well, I do, Rupert. I think her so; she has not a spark of good feeling in her. Don't you go and tell, now?"

"Do you think she is truthful, Millicent?"

"No, I don't. Take care!"

They whirled lightly through the dance, Rupert almost startling Millicent by his unwonted gaiety, laughing and chatting like anyone but his grave self; and she, the colour deepening in her cheeks, the

light in her eyes growing momentarily brighter, looked like a veritable "dance-sprite," so airily did she float through the rooms.

"How beautifully they waltz!" Even Cornelia Granger involuntarily spoke in admiration, and a slender youth near her gave it as his opinion that "Thistledown couldn't be lighter than Mrs. Kathlane in a waltz."

"Are you tired?" said Rupert, looking down at the beautiful face; and Millicent, for answer, said she could keep on for ever. And so they danced on and on, until Rupert saw the bright colour fading away, and the sensitive mouth beginning to droop a little at the corners.

"You *are* tired," he said, and then, before she could answer, he whirled her through the low, open window, into the cool, fresh air on the balcony.

"Thanks," she said. "I believe I was a little faint. Will you get my cloak?" And then, until her cloak came, she sat quiet, like a tired child, with her head resting wearily on the railing.

"The next dance but one is Richard's," she said, as he wrapped the soft, white cloak around her tenderly. "I must not slight him. But we will stay out here until then, unless you wish to go back—in which case I will not keep you with me."

"I shall not dance again to-night," he answered, "unless it is with you."

"I am engaged for every one of them, I am afraid. I could have been engaged three or four times over," she added, laughing. "I am sorry, Rupert, but ——"

"No matter," he interrupted her, almost rudely. "I must get used to it, I suppose." He was standing before her, looking down at her, and she, in her pretty, imperious way, laid her hand on his arm.

"You are cross to-night," she said. "Sit here beside me, and tell me what it is that troubles you."

He hesitated a moment; and then, with a reckless determination to disclose everything, and afterwards leave her for ever, he told her the story of his long love for her. Told her in a fierce, hard way, which almost frightened her, and yet made her reverence and admire him more, perhaps, than she had done before.

"I have loved you, Millicent. I love you now, more than you can imagine, and I have not told you because—because you are so far removed from me in every way. I feared you would think me mercenary. I feared—Oh, Millicent! Heaven only knows how I have loved you; how I have longed to tell you, and yet I have not had the courage. Now it is too late, either for harm or good. I shall pray for your happiness always with the man whom you have chosen."

"What do you mean, Rupert?"

The profound wonder in her voice made him hesitate. "I have heard of your engagement to Mr. Worthington."

"Who has told you *that?*" she asked. But in the same moment Richard Worthington stepped through the low window, and came toward them.

"I have been searching for you everywhere," he said, laughing in his boyish, good-natured way. "It's my dance, most respected cousin Millicent." And she was forced to go, without another word to the man beside her.

"Have you and Mr. Thornbury been quarrelling?" said Richard; who, to do him justice, was entirely innocent of any thought of Mrs. Kathlane, or of anybody else, as a wife. "He looked black as a thunder-cloud, and you are pale."

"I was a little faint after the waltz," she answered. "Don't tease me, Dick;" and so Richard desisted from his inquiries.

Meanwhile Rupert Thornbury, left alone with only his own thoughts for company, sat as utterly and entirely wretched as a man can feel but once in his lifetime. Inside the rooms the music kept untiringly on; the gay dancers floated past the windows; every face was bright with smiles. Outside here, in the darkness, a man sat alone, struggling bravely to lift his cross and bear it uncomplainingly.

How long he sat there he knew not, but at last he roused himself, and rose to his feet. "I must go back," he said. "Cornelia Granger will have a delicate bit of gossip if she sees me here."

So he went in and showed himself, and said a few words to Miss Granger, and strolled about he knew not whither, talking to one, talking to another; and presently found himself up stairs near the library.

The library door was ajar, and as he entered, a little figure all in silvery blue and soft white lace, with scarlet buds glowing and burning here and there, turned and advanced a step toward him. There were tears in the great black eyes, and the red lips were trembling like a grieved child's.

"Was it untrue, Millicent?"

"Every word of it. Dick, indeed! Oh, Rupert!"

He clasped her hands almost rudely.

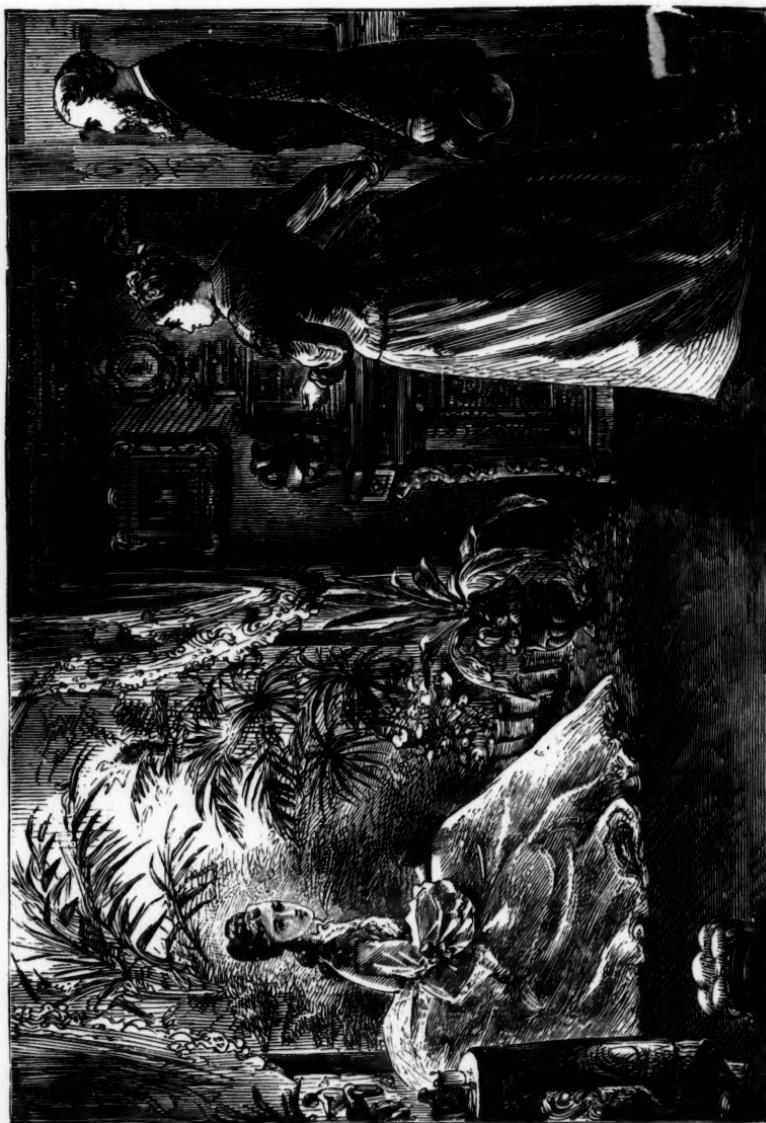
"You are not engaged?"

Only a look answered him. He caught her to him, pouring forth all the sweet love-vows that he had sensitively refrained from before: and Millicent whispered that she never should be engaged, unless it was to him.

A pity but Miss Cornelia Granger had chanced to look into the library.

After waiting so many years!





HARRY FURNISS.

"I have brought a long-lost friend to see you, Edith."

J. SWAIN